United Nations A/69/PV.78

General Assembly

Official Records

Sixty-ninth session

78th plenary meeting

Friday, 16 January 2015, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kutesa .... (Uganda)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 136 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

The President: In document A/69/722, the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that 13 Member States are in arrears in the payment of their financial contributions to the United Nations within the terms of Article 19 of the Charter. I would like to remind delegations that, under Article 19 of the Charter,

> "A Member of the United Nations which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Organization shall have no vote in the General Assembly if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the preceding two full years".

May I therefore take it that the General Assembly takes note of the information contained in document A/69/722?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 7 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

The President: I now invite the attention of the General Assembly to sub-item (a) of agenda item 74, "Oceans and the law of the sea". Members will recall that the Assembly decided to conclude its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 74 and of agenda item 74 as a whole at its 77th plenary meeting, held on 29 December 2014.

I understand that it would be desirable for the Assembly to reopen consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 74 in order for it to consider proposals that may be submitted before it during the resumed part of the session. May I therefore take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to reopen consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 74?

It was so decided.

Agenda items 13 and 115 (*continued*)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

(a) Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Draft decision (A/69/L.46)

The President: Members will recall that the General Assembly heard a debate on agenda item 13 and its sub-item (a) jointly with agenda item 115, and adopted resolution 69/15, entitled "SIDS Accelerated

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Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway", at its 51st meeting, on 14 November 2014. Members will also recall that, under sub-item (a) of agenda item 13 and agenda item 115, the Assembly adopted resolution 69/108, entitled "Report of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 66/288", at its 65th meeting, on 8 December 2014. Members will further recall that, under the same items, the General Assembly adopted resolution 69/244, entitled "Organization of the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda", and decision 69/550, entitled "Dates for the meetings of the process of intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda", at its 77th plenary meeting, held on 29 December 2014.

We shall now proceed to consider draft decision A/69/L.46.

I should now like to give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): In connection with draft decision A/69/L.46, entitled "Modalities for the process of intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda", I wish to put on record the following statement of financial implications on behalf of the Secretary-General, in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

By paragraph 2 (c) of the draft decision, the Assembly would decide that the outcome document to be prepared for adoption at the summit in September 2015 may include the following main components: declarations, sustainable development goals and targets; means of implementation and global partnership for sustainable development; and follow-up and review. Additionally, by paragraph 2 (f) of the draft decision, the Assembly would decide that the initial draft of the outcome document on the post-2015 development agenda shall be prepared by the co-facilitators on the basis of views provided by Member States and taking into account substantive discussions in the process of the intergovernmental negotiations, and shall be presented to Member States by May 2015 for the intergovernmental negotiations. Pursuant to paragraph 2 (c) and (f) of the draft decision, the request for the outcome document would constitute an addition to the documentation workload of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM), and consequently additional resources would be required.

However, at this time, the specific parameters of the outcome document are yet to be decided by the Assembly. Therefore, in the absence of the specific parameters for the outcome document, it is not possible at the present time to estimate the resource implications of the requirement for documentation. Upon decision by the General Assembly on the specific parameters for the outcome document, the Secretary-General will submit the detailed costs of such a requirement in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the Assembly.

Accordingly, the adoption of draft decision A/69/L.46 would not give not rise to any financial implications under the programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft decision A/69/L.46, entitled "Modalities for the process of intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda". May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft decision A/69/L.46?

Draft decision A/69/L.46 was adopted (decision 69/555).

The President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote, may I remind the delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Ms. Miyano (Japan): Japan welcomes the adoption of the decision entitled "Modalities for the process of intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda". I thank the co-facilitators and their staff for their tireless efforts and commend the constructive engagement of all Member States involved. I would like to express our position regarding the statement made by the Secretariat on the possibility of budgetary implications concerning the outcome document.

My delegation finds it extremely disappointing that the adoption of the decision has been postponed until today, not because of any substantial differences among the Member States, but because the possibility of additional programme budget implications has been raised by the Secretariat days after the deadline for submission to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee had passed in December. In this regard, I would recall the extraordinary efforts of the co-facilitators who prepared decision 69/550, especially for the purpose of processing the programme budget implications in accordance with the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. That decision was adopted on 29 December 2014. All budgetary issues could have been resolved through the said decision had there been timely information. The Secretariat is requested to ensure that such an incident does not happen again.

My delegation considers it important that when the details of the outcome document become clear and the calculations are made, utmost efforts should be made to absorb the resources required for the outcome document in the existing budget. Should there nonetheless be any programme budget implications, this should be properly discussed by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee.

Let me assure the Assembly that my delegation will continue to be constructively engaged in the discussion to adopt a truly meaningful outcome in September.

Ms. Maricle (United States of America): My delegation would like to thank the co-Chairs for their leadership during this process and our colleagues for their flexibility and constructive spirit, which enabled us all to reach a consensus on the important decision 69/555.

The United States notes that paragraph 4 states that "the outcome document of the post-2015 development agenda should be adopted by consensus". We intend to make every effort to reach consensus. If despite best efforts, it is not possible to reach consensus, then the use of the word "should" means that rules 82 through 91 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly would apply to the adoption of the outcome document.

We of course trust that all delegations share the goal of reaching a consensus on the post-2015 outcome document in order to cement the agenda's universality and significance. We are determined to reach that goal and appreciate that our fellow Member States share that same commitment.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of position.

I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Bargawi (European Union): I speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States.

We welcome decision 69/555, on modalities for the post-2015 intergovernmental negotiation process, which provides a useful framework for our collective work ahead. As for the participation of civil society and other stakeholders, we are pleased that the decision affords them the opportunity to participate in our deliberations in a way that is no less open than the arrangements used during the session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals and preferably in a manner that further enhances their engagement and contributions.

We are content with the way the provisional road map is set out in the decision, but we also stress that the flexibility in this decision committing the co-facilitators to adjust the meeting calendar removes the need to seek a further decision by the Assembly on this issue. Such adjustments to the road map will be within the co-facilitators' mandate. If adjustments are deemed necessary, it would of course be important that Member States be informed as soon as possible.

As for the importance of achieving a consensus-based document for adoption at the September summit, we wholeheartedly agree, and note that that is the approach we follow in all our engagements at the United Nations. We do not read paragraph 4 as in any way modifying the relevant rules of procedure of the Assembly.

The European Union and its member States would like to thank the co-facilitators, the Permanent Representatives of Kenya and Ireland, for their guidance and leadership, and we look forward to engaging constructively and positively in our discussions on the post-2015 development agenda ahead.

The President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 13 and agenda item 115.

Agenda item 123 (*continued*)

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations

(e) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Caribbean Community

Draft resolution (A/69/L.51)

The President: Members will recall that the Assembly held its debate on agenda item 123 and its sub-items (a) to (y) at its 48th plenary meeting, on 11 November 2014.

I now give the floor to the representative of Grenada to introduce draft resolution A/69/L.51.

Mr. Antoine (Grenada): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/69/L.51, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Caribbean Community", on behalf of the States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the sponsors of the draft resolution.

The draft resolution reflects the latest developments in cooperation activities between the secretariats of the United Nations and the Caribbean Community, as documented in the Secretary-General's report (A/69/228), and other areas in which cooperation between the two secretariats and the member States of CARICOM have been critical to advancing long-standing regional objectives.

CARICOM welcomes, in this draft resolution, the strong collaboration with the United Nations on issues such as citizen security, non-communicable diseases and climate change, which represent some of the critical areas in which the United Nations and the Caribbean Community have forged enduring and important partnerships. Consistent with the calls contained in the previous resolutions on cooperation between the United Nations and CARICOM, the draft likewise contains a call upon the Secretary-General, in association with the Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community, to continue to assist in furthering the development and maintenance of peace and security within the Caribbean Community.

For CARICOM, many of our challenges, whether related to development or security, emanate from global phenomena such as the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons and the ongoing impacts of the protracted global financial and economic crisis. The latter itself has jeopardized development progress and stymied CARICOM's economic growth. In that regard, CARICOM continues to underscore the importance of reliable, accessible and adequate financing for development and of a more robust collaboration with the United Nations to build capacity in pursuit of sustainable development.

In the draft resolution, the General Assembly therefore repeats the call on the United Nations system to intensify its assistance to CARICOM member States in order that they may be better able to address the unique vulnerabilities and sustainable development challenges they face, including through the sustained and effective implementation of the outcomes of the three international conferences on small island developing States held, respectively, in Barbados, Mauritius and Samoa.

In the area of peace and security, the Assembly acknowledges in the draft resolution the launch of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) regional programme for the period 2014-2016 in support of the CARICOM crime and security strategy. While we are pleased with the conclusion of a memorandum of understanding between UNODC and CARICOM's Implementation Agency for Crime and Security, we nonetheless reiterate the urgent necessity to reopen the regional office of UNODC. The United Nations commitment to support CARICOM in achieving its objectives must go hand in hand with its commitment to remain on the ground.

Looking forward, the opportunities for strengthened cooperation are many. CARICOM leaders have endorsed a strategic plan for the Caribbean Community for the period 2015-2019. As acknowledged in the draft resolution, the plan highlights 11 high-priority areas. It is CARICOM's hope that, as we improve coordination and coherence with the United Nations, including through the regional team of the United Nations Development Group for Latin America and the Caribbean, those priority areas will assist in providing strategic focus for further cooperation.

In 2015, as we begin to chart the course for the post-2015 development agenda, the financing for development architecture, the new climate change regime and the successor framework for disaster risk reduction, CARICOM affirms its readiness and commitment to work with and through the United Nations to ensure that this body remains the central forum for advancing global responses to the myriad global challenges.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/69/L.51, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Caribbean Community".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution and in addition to those delegations listed in document A/69/L.51, the following countries have become sponsors of the draft resolution: Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Croatia, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Italy, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Montenegro, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Samoa, Sweden, Timor-Leste, Turkey and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The President: May I take it that the General Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/69/L.51?

Draft resolution A/69/L.51 was adopted (resolution 69/265).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (e) of agenda item 123?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.

United Nations A/69/PV.79

General Assembly
Sixty-ninth session

Official Records

79th plenary meeting
Monday, 2 February 2015, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kutesa .... (Uganda)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Antoine (Grenada), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Tribute to the memory of King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud of Saudi Arabia, late Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques

The Acting President: Before we proceed to the items on our agenda, it is my sad duty to pay tribute to the memory of the late Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud of Saudi Arabia, who passed away on Friday, 23 January 2015. On behalf of the General Assembly, I would like to request the representative of Saudi Arabia to convey our condolences to the Government and the people of Saudi Arabia and to the bereaved family of King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud.

I now invite the representatives to stand and observe a moment of silence in tribute to the memory of King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silence.

The Acting President: I shall now deliver a statement on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session, on the passing away of the King of Saudi Arabia, His Majesty King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, late Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques.

"It is with profound respect and regret that I pay tribute to King Abdullah, who passed away earlier this month. The King leaves behind an important legacy through his major contributions to the development of the Kingdom and the Arab region and, indeed, the entire world. King Abdullah's leadership and vision at home led to key advancements in many important areas. His efforts helped to ensure that his nation enjoyed strong international engagement and partnerships. Under his leadership, Saudi Arabia also became an important contributor to humanitarian issues, helping to improve the lives of people around the world. The King's efforts to promote dialogue, harmony and peace will long be remembered. In particular, he took bold steps to advance the Arab Peace Initiative in the search for lasting peace in the region.

"In conclusion, I would like to extend my sincere condolences to the bereaved family, the Government and the people of Saudi Arabia. May God grant King Abdullah's soul peace."

I now give the floor to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: I wish to thank the General Assembly for organizing this ceremony. I am honoured to join all those present in paying tribute to the life and legacy of the late Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud.

King Abdullah was a wise and compassionate leader who guided Saudi Arabia's development,

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worked to resolve peace and security challenges and address counter-terrorism, and devoted his energies to seeking reconciliation and understanding among people of different cultures through inter-faith dialogue initiatives. I am especially grateful for his stalwart support for the United Nations and the least fortunate among us. He was a champion against global hunger. In 2008, during the crisis over high food prices, he arranged for the World Food Programme (WFP) to receive $500 million — the largest single donation that the WFP has ever received. More recently, King Abdullah generously supported humanitarian assistance efforts in Syria and Iraq, where millions of people are in dire need. He also undertook initiatives to promote dialogue among the world's faiths. In 2008, he became the first King of Saudi Arabia to address the United Nations at an important two-day bridge-building gathering of world leaders.

I met him on several occasions, most recently last July in Jeddah. At that time, we focused primarily on resolving the Middle East conflict and reviving the Arab Peace Initiative, for which he was the driving force. But our conversation also ranged more widely. He told me of his belief in the fraternity and brotherhood among human beings. He stressed that tensions between cultures and faiths are not a function of religion but of politicians who exploit division. At the end of the meeting, I thanked him for his leadership. I told him I was energized by his compassion. He simply replied that he did not seek recognition or gratitude. Instead, he said, "What I do I feel is incumbent on any human being". This message of humility and grace were his last words to me, and the ones by which I will remember him most.

King Abdullah lived through much turmoil and change. His efforts made an impact throughout the Arab and Islamic worlds and the international community. I offer my condolences to the bereaved royal family and to the people of Saudi Arabia. I look forward to personally conveying my sympathy and support when I visit Saudi Arabia, which I hope to do very soon.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Laassel (Morocco): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of African States on this very sad occasion for all of us on the passing away, on 23 January 2015, of King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud. The African Group would like to commend the decision to convene this special meeting of the General Assembly dedicated to paying tribute to the late King Abdullah. It is a very significant gesture to recognize the engagement of this leader of wisdom in international peace and security.

The African Group would like to convey its condolences to the Government and the people of Saudi Arabia for their great loss, which is also a loss for the international community as a whole, including our continent, Africa.

Yes, it is a loss for us all if we take into account the wise guidance and contributions of the late King to international peace and security as well as to international cooperation. Indeed, under his reign, Africa benefited from many projects aimed at socioeconomic development and cooperation in many fields. Very recently, King Abdullah pledged $35 million to fight Ebola on the African continent — Ebola had been declared by the Security Council as a threat to peace and security.

In his capacity as the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, the late King spared no effort to aid pilgrims from all over the world, including those from our continent, to accomplish their rituals in perfect and respectful conditions.

The late King also shared the idea of holding a dialogue among civilizations to prevent any extreme views that might cause tensions among civilizations. Hence, his contributions to bridging the gap between cultures and narrowing tensions in what are referred to as clashes of civilizations were realized by the establishment in Vienna in 2011 of the International Centre of King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue.

Nowadays, we witness the spillover of violent extremism and terrorism. Since his enthronement, he managed first to fight the local version of Al-Qaida, which perpetrated acts of terrorism in Saudi Arabia, and by 2006 he had managed to rid the country of the scourge of terrorism. He also embarked on a fight against it at the international level. In 2014, he spearheaded Saudi Arabia's contribution of $100 million to establish the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre. The African States are in dire need of being able to benefit from the Centre's programmes on capacity-building to fight terrorism and terrorist groups such as o Haram.

As to the question of Palestine, to which the African States are eager to find a solution, the late

King spared no effort to seek a breakthrough to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of two States, taking into account the Arab Peace Initiative, adopted in Beirut at the 2007 Arab League Summit.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Viet Nam, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

Mrs. Nguyen (Viet Nam): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States at this solemn gathering of the General Assembly to pay tribute to the memory of the late Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, His Majesty King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

I would like to begin by expressing our sincere thanks to the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting of the General Assembly. On behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group, I would like to extend our deepest condolences to the bereaved family of King Abdullah and to the Government and the people of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, a fellow member of the Asia-Pacific Group.

The passing away of King Abdullah is a great loss to the royal family, the Government and the people of Saudi Arabia. The world has lost an outstanding leader. Under his leadership, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia registered remarkable advantages and brought greater prosperity to its people. The international community will remember King Abdullah's attention and contribution to the furthering of diplomatic initiatives for the settlement of regional and international issues, especially in the Middle East. As the Secretary-General has stated, King Abdullah served as a driving force behind the Arab Peace Initiative and has left a tangible legacy that can point the way towards peace in the Middle East.

The United Nations community will also remember King Abdullah for Saudi Arabia's contribution, under his leadership, to the work of the United Nations as well as its main organs, specialized agencies and bodies, especially in the fields of development, cooperation and humanitarian assistance. That important contribution has significantly promoted the role of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security and promoting development.

Given his significant legacy and our strong memories of his leadership, we are convinced that the royal family, the Government and the people of Saudi Arabia will make greater achievements in national development. It is also our conviction that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, under the leadership of King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, will continue to contribute to our collective efforts for peace, security and development the world over.

At this solemn moment, I would like to once again reiterate our commitment to cooperation with the Government and the people of Saudi Arabia in our joint endeavours for a better world.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Hungary, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Ms. Bogyay (Hungary): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

The Eastern European Group would like to express its deepest condolences to the Government and the people of Saudi Arabia on the sad occasion of the passing away, on 23 January, of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, His Majesty King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

King Abdullah led a long and distinguished life to the benefit of his country, advancing its modernization and economic development. His Majesty was an important figure in international and regional affairs, including through his support for interreligious and intercultural dialogue. He played a crucial role in the region in fighting extremism and supporting peace and stability, including through the Arab Peace Initiative. On this sad occasion, the Eastern European Group offers its sincere sympathies to the royal family and to the Government and the people of Saudi Arabia.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Haiti, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Régis (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): It is a great honour for me to speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States in expressing our heartfelt sadness at the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's plunge into mourning with its loss of King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud. In this time of sorrow, the Latin American and Caribbean Group joins the community of the States Members of the United Nations in offering its sincere condolences to the noble Saudi people and their Government.

Heir to an illustrious line of monarchs whose history is one with that of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia itself, King Abdullah was one of its most remarkable figures. We can look back admiringly on the road travelled under his enlightened leadership by Saudi Arabia, a country ranked among the world's 20 largest economies. King Abdullah was a reformer who was able to undertake his kingdom's adaptation to the demands of our times, directing its evolution with the determination and moderation that everyone saw in him. He helped to give new impetus to the country's economic and political modernization, making Saudi Arabia a respected State and a model of stability in a conflict-torn region, taking a leading role through its exercise of a moderating influence that was essential, indeed indispensable, not merely in the Arab-Persian Gulf region and the Middle East but on the global chess board as well.

King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, the Custodian of Islam's holy places, was a universally respected personality, a repository of the kind of knowledge that derives from the great universal values that unite all religions, beliefs and cultures and that enable all men to see themselves as part of humankind. His historic visit to the Vatican, a demonstration of his faith in interreligious dialogue, remains etched in our memory.

King Abdullah was also an apostle of peace. No one can be unaware of the moderating influence he deployed to help ease tensions and foster dialogue in a region deeply scarred by every kind of conflict. One of his most noble ambitions was to work for peace in the Middle East so as to move beyond the sectarian clashes, divisions and tragedies of the twentieth century. Who can have forgotten the admirable courage he showed in presenting his call for world peace together with Israel, an initiative that will forever be associated with his name? (see A/63/PV.46) The peoples of the world will be eternally grateful to him for firmly making it clear that only a negotiated political settlement that includes all stakeholders and has the support and assurances of the international community can lead to a lasting solution in the Middle East.

There can be no question of King Abdullah's contribution to increasing his country's reach and making Saudi Arabia, the cradle of Islam, a beacon in the Gulf. He was also the standard bearer for a great ambition for which the international community will be forever grateful, that aspiration to build a better world that supports those things that unite humankind rather than those that divide them. Through that he rendered great service to the cause of peace and universal solidarity that is so dear to the heart of the United Nations — that is indeed its raison d'être.

His passing is therefore a loss not only for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic world but for our entire planet, which has lost in him a great leader whose nobility, bravery and generosity were universally valued, and a fervent believer in dialogue among civilizations, aware of all of our peoples' shared destiny and a powerful contributor to the cause of international peace and solidarity.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Austria, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and Other States.

Mr. Riecken (Austria): I have the honour to speak today on behalf of the Group of Western European and Other States. We are deeply saddened by the passing of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, King and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. We offer our sincere condolences to the Saudi royal family and the people of Saudi Arabia.

King Abdullah was a man of great vision and leadership who made a major contribution to the advancement of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He was a key architect of his country's economic and political progress. Among his many achievements he oversaw the transformation of the Kingdom's economy, presided over its first municipal elections and supported an expanded role for the consultative Shura Council that included the appointment of women. Under his guidance, the country achieved remarkable growth and prosperity for its people. He also placed a major emphasis on education, particularly as patron of the visionary King Abdullah scholarship programme. We in the Western European and Other States Group have been fortunate enough to host many of the recipients of the programme at education institutions in our countries.

King Abdullah was committed to a fair and lasting peace in the Middle East, including through the Arab Peace Initiative, as well as to countering violent extremism. His substantial contribution to the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre here in New York will form part of his legacy. We also pay tribute to his generous humanitarian and development support to those in need, and to his promotion of international interfaith dialogue.

Our thoughts are with His Majesty King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud as he takes the throne and builds on King Abdullah's many achievements. King Abdullah's leadership throughout the Arab and Islamic worlds and the international community will not be forgotten.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States, who will speak on behalf of the host country.

Ms. Power (United States of America): On behalf of the United States as host country for the United Nations, I wish to offer our condolences to the people and the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the loss of King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud.

There is an Arabic proverb that says, "A tree begins with a seed". King Abdullah planted many seeds for Saudi Arabia's future, perhaps none so much as in the education of his people. Shortly after ascending to the throne in 2005, he created an ambitious scholarship programme to educate Saudi students abroad. Today more than 87,000 Saudi students are currently studying in the United States, with another 33,000 in other countries around the globe. Nearly half of the Saudi students currently participating in the programme in the United States are female. Those scholarship students have not only been ambassadors for Saudi Arabia around the world; on returning home they are ambassadors for the world in Saudi Arabia. The seeds planted in the students and their experience will grow in them and spread to their families and communities for the rest of their lives. On hearing of the King's passing, Mohammed Hakeem, a Saudi doctoral student in Canada, tweeted, "I am [a] scholar. I am the son of his dream….My heart is broken." King Abdullah also created both co-educational and all-female university and graduate degree programmes at schools in the Kingdom, and in 2011 granted women the right to vote and run in municipal elections.

During King Abdullah's time on the throne, the United States and Saudi Arabia worked together to confront many challenges. King Abdullah prioritized strengthening the United States-Saudi counter-terrorism relationship, including fighting violent extremist groups such as Al-Qaida and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, and combating foreign fighters. He was the author and proponent of the Arab Peace Initiative, a seminal document for building consensus on achieving a viable, just, two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In the words of President Obama, it is "an endeavour that will outlive him as an enduring contribution to the search for peace in the region."

King Abdullah's efforts to promote and expand interfaith dialogue will constitute a lasting legacy that we must all deepen. His humanitarian contributions, including the $500 million donation to address the humanitarian catastrophes in Iraq and Syria, are helping keep people fed this very cruel winter. As Secretary Kerry said last week and we repeat today, the United States has lost a friend, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Middle East and the world have lost a revered leader.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Jordan, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

Mrs. Kawar (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Today we lament the passing of King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, a wise leader and king who devoted his life to the service of his nation and country. He defended the causes of the Arab and Islamic nations and humankind with true authenticity.

The death of King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud is a great loss, for this was a man whose achievement was deeply woven into the body of the Arab world. His values were noble and courageous, and we will remember his legacy and his support for united Arab action in strengthening its pillars and his defence of the Arab cause in the most difficult circumstances. His role was not limited to the Arab countries but went beyond them to encompass Islamic and world issues. Today we are remembering the very visible legacy he left, as will generations to come, so that his name and memory will live forever in the constructive role he played and the efforts he deployed for good causes wherever they might be.

Today, as we pay tribute to a leader of broad vision, we can touch on only some of his achievements, which are too numerous to list in full. Over the course of a decade he led his country forward, stimulating its development and making it a vital member of the world community. He valued education greatly as a way of measuring a country's progress, founding a number of institutes and universities. He worked to promote the Kingdom's educational system, and in that regard we cannot fail to mention the role he played in development all over the country and in various sectors, including health, society and the economy. We also remember his efforts to improve women's opportunities in Saudi Arabia, believing firmly as he did in the importance of their role. He also worked to strengthen the role of young people in Saudi society and on every front.

King Abdullah spared no effort in defending the causes of Islam and emphasizing Islam's true, moderate character, realizing how essential it was to confront the lies promoted by the violent extremist groups that wish to destroy Islam's image. He was a major supporter of dialogue and moderation, rejecting violence, extremism and terrorism in any form. He worked to strengthen many initiatives aimed at promoting dialogue among civilizations and religions and establishing harmonious relations with others. His work on advancing the concept of coexistence and calling for peace, love and stability and for a settlement of crises through dialogue, while strengthening cooperation among the peoples of the world, was an example for others working on those initiatives to follow.

We are comforted today by the thought that the man following in the footsteps of the deceased is the new Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, and we also wish Crown Prince Muqrin Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud and Prince Muhammad Bin Nayef Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud every success, good health and long life so that they can continue on the path begun by founding King Abdulaziz.

In conclusion, we hope the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will continue to see peace, stability and progress increase under the reign of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kuwait, who will speak on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait): I am honoured to speak here today on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. I would first like to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to His Excellency the President of the General Assembly for organizing this meeting to enable us to express our deep sorrow and convey our sincere condolences to the royal family and the Government and the people of Saudi Arabia for the loss to the Islamic umma of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, the late King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud.

The international community as a whole, and the Muslim world in particular, has lost an exceptional and admirable leader who never hesitated to lend a helping hand or provide assistance when needed to millions of people around the world stricken by natural disasters, epidemics or conflicts. In that way he underscored his deep belief in the importance of international cooperation and partnership between all nations, and of dialogue among all countries and peoples, regardless of their different cultures or beliefs.

As we convene here in the Hall of the General Assembly, we recall with great appreciation the King's fruitful efforts and outstanding achievements in various international fields, such as combating terrorism, providing humanitarian assistance, promoting peace and supporting interfaith and intercultural dialogue. In that context, there can be no doubt about the efforts of the late King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz to convene and ensure the success of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly held in November 2008 at its sixty-third session (see A/63/PV.46), as well as the Saudi initiative to establish the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, which truly reflects his firm belief in the importance of partnership and cooperation among all peoples and cultures, and of strengthening ways to improve rapprochement and fraternity between them.

The great contributions of the late King Abdullah in bringing prosperity and advancement to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and all the achievements and successes of his reign, did not distract him from lending a helping hand to millions of people all over the world. The Muslim world will always remember with pride his historic expansion of the two Holy Mosques and all the very apparent efforts that Saudi Arabia made to enable all Muslims to take advantage of the right of pilgrimage and umrah. His loss is indeed great, for this was a man who dedicated his life to achieving the well-being and glory of his people, and who worked honestly and tirelessly to defend the cause of Muslim nations, promoting an Islamic society in which love, cooperation, tolerance and fraternity prevail.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation, while mourning the loss of a great leader, who for as long as he lived carried in his big heart his concern for the Muslim world, can only pray to the Almighty to bestow his grace on his soul and have mercy on him, and to reward him for all his good deeds. We are certain that his successor, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, will continue ably and wisely to lead the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on its march along the road to growth, prosperity and the welfare of its people, and will add to the Kingdom's pivotal role in fostering international cooperation, strengthening partnerships and ensuring international peace and security.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar, who will speak on behalf of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the pleasure of speaking on behalf of the States members of the Gulf Cooperation Council — the Kingdom of Bahrain, the State of Kuwait, the Sultanate of Oman, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and my own country, the State of Qatar. As Chair of this year's session of the Council, Qatar would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting enabling us to pay tribute to a great leader, to whom the entire world is grateful for his achievements in various areas of life, and particularly on behalf of causes of great importance to the international community. In that regard, on behalf of the Gulf Cooperation Council, I would like to thank the geographic Groups and the States Members of the United Nations for participating in this meeting and expressing their condolences.

The Arab and Muslim worlds, especially the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, have lost a great leader and an eminent personality of those worlds, the late Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, our brother country. Owing to our close relations as brother countries in the Gulf community, united in the Gulf Cooperation Council, and conscious of the late King's achievements, we feel deep sorrow at his passing. We cannot find the words to express what we feel. But our faith in God allows us to believe that the legacy of the late King can strengthen the rights of all. The world will never forget his achievements and will always remember him.

The Gulf community has lost a historic and eminent personality who contributed greatly to cooperation and to the promotion of the role of the Gulf Cooperation Council at the regional and international levels. The world has lost a wise man who believed firmly in the importance of international cooperation and the necessity of making every effort to achieve cooperation among peoples, whatever their religious or cultural background, so as to defuse crises and work for peace in the world. He played a major role in organizing the high-level meeting on interfaith dialogue held on 12 November 2008 here in New York during the General Assembly's sixty-third session (see A/63/PV.46). At that meeting, the late King proposed the creation of a world institute for peace and human dialogue, based at the United Nations, and today we see the results of that action in the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, which plays an important role in that regard. On the humanitarian front, the late King played a major role, received favourably by regional and international organizations. His support was not confined to one group or one category, but encompassed all who needed help around the world.

Well aware of the importance of peace and stability in the Middle East, the late King proposed the Arab Peace Initiative between our countries and Israel, adopted at a summit in Beirut in 2002. That Initiative is one of the principal reference points in the efforts to reach a just, lasting peace based on a two-State solution. Based on his broad vision, the late King also launched an initiative to combat terrorism around the world at the Counter-Terrorism International Conference, held in Riyadh in 2005. During the Conference he announced the creation of an initiative establishing a counter-terrorism centre, which has indeed been created within the United Nations and continues his work in supporting international efforts to combat terrorism.

King Abdullah was a wise man, a leader, a human being who worked tirelessly in the service of his nation and country. During his reign, he showed devotion to his country and his nation, creating a humane society. His achievements in terms of bringing about prosperity led the country to welcome millions of Muslims who came for the Hajj — the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. He worked to expand the space around the Two Holy Mosques, for which we are grateful.

In conclusion, when we recall the great achievements of the late King at the national, regional and international levels, we trust that the present Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, is the best successor to the most eminent predecessor. We are sure that he will continue the wise path of cooperation with the international community to respond to the challenges that arise and achieve a world where peace and stability and growth will prevail.

That is a comfort to us in our hour of loss. May God take the soul of the late King to Him. We pray for him.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Al-Mouallimi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): On 23 January, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud of Saudi Arabia, departed our world. With his departure, the world has lost a life-long shining star and a remarkable, prominent leader. The departed was among the noblest of men, the most courageous and, indeed, the most generous. He was a statesman whose deeds touched the hearts of men and women throughout the world.

King Abdullah's heart was moved by the hungry and the needy. He was a pioneer in giving aid to the World Food Programme. He provided assistance to the victims of floods, natural disasters and epidemic diseases on all continents of our world.

King Abdullah's heart overflowed with feelings of love, peace, mutual understanding and the need for communication among all peoples of the Earth. He launched his initiative for dialogue among the faithful of various religions and all cultures from this very rostrum. He was always an advocate of the Charter of the United Nations and its principles. He always called for peace and harmony in our world.

In the past few days, Riyadh has received a large number of leaders of the States Members of the United Nations who went to share our grief and offer their kind condolences to the family of the departed. Today, the General Assembly has convened to bestow upon me its sincere feelings and sentiments. If the death of King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud is a loss for the world, for humankind and for the United Nations as a leader, the Saudi Arabian people and I personally have lost a kind, warm-hearted and friendly father whose last words, in bidding farewell to his people were, "Do not forget me in your good prayers."

We will not forget our good King. Here too are the witnesses of God's creation of the universe from all continents mentioning the King's good deeds and actions. May God give him the best reward for what he did for humankind.

Allow me to convey to the Assembly the greetings and appreciation of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, who has assumed the mantle of leadership and who will faithfully continue our procession forward. He extends the hand of Saudi Arabia to all nations of the world in love, friendship, peace and harmony.

I thank my dear brothers and colleagues. I thank the leaders and the peoples of their countries. We thank God who has blessed us with the life of our King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud. We thank God who has blessed us with this honourable remembrance following his departure. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, we belong to God and to Him we shall return.

Tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Mårten Grunditz, late Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations

The Acting President: It also my sad duty to pay tribute to the memory of the late Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Mårten Grunditz, who passed away on Tuesday, 27 January. On behalf of the General Assembly, I would like to request the representative of Sweden to convey our condolences to the Government and the people of Sweden and to the bereaved family of Ambassador Mårten Grunditz.

I now invite representatives to stand and observe a minute of silence in tribute to his memory.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silence.

The Acting President: I would like to deliver a statement on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa, President of the General Assembly, on the passing of His Excellency Mr. Mårten Grunditz, Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations:

> "Today we pay tribute to Ambassador Grunditz, whose passing last week deeply saddened the United Nations community. I had the privilege of interacting and working with Ambassador Grunditz over the last several months. I know I speak for many of us when I say he will be greatly missed.
>
> "The Ambassador's work here at the United Nations spanned nearly five years and leaves behind an indelible legacy. Ambassador Grunditz had a genuine interest in many issues central to the Organization's work, including development, peacekeeping, humanitarian issues and human rights.
>
> "Ambassador Grunditz took a holistic view on international affairs. He had a strong interest in

broader peacebuilding issues and served as Chair of the Liberia configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. He also believed strongly in the importance of strengthening cooperation between regional organizations and the United Nations.

"The Ambassador worked tirelessly on issues related to the rights of vulnerable persons, including those with disabilities and children. Just this past November he helped organize a high-level meeting commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

"In conclusion, I wish to convey my sincere condolences to the bereaved family, the Government and the people of Sweden. May his soul rest in peace."

I now give the floor to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: I thank the General Assembly for taking time this morning to pay our respects to His Excellency Ambassador Mårten Grunditz of Sweden.

Ambassador Grunditz had a distinguished diplomatic career, with postings in Moscow, Beijing, Washington, D.C., and other capitals. The geographical breadth of his assignments was matched by the depth of his commitment to international cooperation and the United Nations.

During the four and a half years that he served as Sweden's Permanent Representative here in New York, he was an active presence across our agenda. I am especially grateful for his advocacy for the rights of persons with disabilities, his dedication to helping to consolidate peace in Liberia and his devotion to carrying on the legacy of former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld.

He was known — and will be remembered — for his warmth, kindness, integrity and dignity. I thank the General Assembly for taking time this morning to remember a good colleague, and I offer my condolences to Ambassador Grunditz's his family, Ms. Åhs-Grunditz and their two children, and many friends, and to his colleagues in the Swedish Foreign Ministry and to all others touched by this loss.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Laassel (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): I am to take the floor on behalf of the Group of African States.

The African Group would like to extend its sincere condolences to the family and friends of His Excellency Ambassador Mårten Grunditz, Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations in New York, as well as to the Swedish Government. We would like to pay special tribute to a man who was known for his kindness, devotion and generosity, which inspired us all.

Ambassador Grunditz was also known for his enthusiasm, his self-restraint and his sincere commitment to the African continent, in particular on issues of peacebuilding. Mr. Grunditz served as Chair of the Liberian configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and actively participated in the work of the Commission.

The African Group is confident that the Permanent Mission of Sweden will get through this difficult period and continue to pursue its work within the international community.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Viet Nam, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

Mrs. Nguyen Phuong Nga (Viet Nam): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States at this solemn gathering of the General Assembly to pay tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Mårten Grunditz, late Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations.

It was with the deepest sadness that we learned of the passing away of Ambassador Grunditz. On behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group, I would like to express our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family of Ambassador Grunditz and to the Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations.

Ambassador Grunditz, a dear colleague to many of us, was an outstanding and skilled diplomat who served his country in an efficient manner during his long and successful career. He served with great distinction in various capacities. We are grateful for the wealth of experience that he brought to New York and shared with us as the Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations.

During more than four years in New York, Ambassador Grunditz strove tirelessly to contribute to the work of the United Nations, including by serving as an active member of a number of bodies and offices of the Organization. His contribution was wide-ranging, from development cooperation, to peace and security, to the reform of the United Nations, and it is still so vivid to all of us. He will be dearly missed by all of us.

On this occasion, on behalf of our Group, I would like to reiterate our commitment to continuing to work closely with the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Sweden in our joint efforts.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Hungary, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Ms. Bogyay (Hungary): On behalf of the Group of Eastern European States, I would also like to offer condolences to the family and friends of His Excellency Mr. Mårten Grunditz, as well as to the Swedish Mission to the United Nations, upon his passing on 27 January.

Ambassador Grunditz's career spanned more than 40 years. He served his country in a number of important assignments. Mårten was a very professional and knowledgeable colleague. His gentle and kind presence and professional legacy will be sorely missed and remembered by all of us.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Haiti, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Régis (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): The Group of Latin American and Caribbean States learned with shock and regret of the sudden death, on 27 January, of our esteemed colleague, His Excellency Mr. Mårten Grunditz, Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations in New York. This news had the effect of a cold shower on the entire diplomatic community, and each of us has been deeply affected this sudden loss.

Ambassador Grunditz, with his long and distinguished career, remains eminently linked to the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, where he had a very successful career for over 40 years, working on behalf of his country in various cities and capitals as diverse as Moscow, Beijing, Washington, D.C., Geneva, London and Athens, where he took on posts of increasing responsibility, before coming to New York in 2010 to lend his services as Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations.

A distinguished and seasoned diplomat who acted with ease and spoke fluently in the six languages of the Organization, Ambassador Grunditz leaves us a strong memory of a top official whose modesty was matched only by his rich erudition, his great culture and his deep knowledge of the United Nations system, of which he was, in his way, the embodiment and the expression.

Ambassador Grunditz was part of all the initiatives and the battles undertaken in the Organization to ensure the triumph of law and justice, specifically for women and children tragically affected by conflict situations, wherever in the world they occur. In that regard, Ambassador Grunditz was a great humanist, following in the footsteps of other great intellectuals and statesmen of his country who greatly influenced our world to be more equal and just. He follows in the footsteps of the second Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld, who passed away in 1961 while serving our great Organization, and Mr. Olaf Palme, the former Swedish Prime Minister, committed pacifist and dignified statesman, who died tragically in Stockholm in 1990.

The Group of Latin American and Caribbean States expresses its greatest sympathy to all of those who are grieving, and particularly to the spouse of Mårten Grunditz, Maine, to his children, Jenny and Henrik, to his family, to his friends and to the staff of the Permanent Mission of Sweden in New York. The Group of Latin American and Caribbean States asks the Mission to transmit its sorrowful condolences to the Government and the people of Sweden on the death of this great and distinguished statesman, whose memory will remain alive among us here in the United Nations.

May all of those here in New York and in Stockholm who are greatly affected by this sudden departure find in my words an expression of the heartfelt grief and fraternal solidarity that we share with them at this difficult hour.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Austria, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and Other States.

Mr. Riecken (Austria): I have the honour today to speak on behalf of the States members of the Group of Western European and Other States.

We are deeply saddened by the passing of our dear colleague and friend, His Excellency Mr. Mårten Grunditz, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations here in New York. We offer our heartfelt condolences and sympathy to his family and to the staff of the Permanent Mission of Sweden. We join them in mourning his untimely passing.

We have all lost not only a deeply respected and excellent colleague but also a friend who greatly inspired those who were fortunate enough to know him and work with him. Ambassador Grunditz was an outstanding and highly professional diplomat who impressed us deeply with his sharp mind, elegance, wisdom and thoughtfulness.

But he was not just brilliant and talented. He worked vigorously and with personal conviction to really advance the work of the United Nations. He was a remarkable negotiator and an intelligent debater. Any discussion Ambassador Grunditz participated in was to sure to benefit from his wise contributions and the constructive role he would consistently play.

As a remarkable representative of his country, Ambassador Grunditz had a significant and lasting impact on our joint efforts to promote development, gender equality and human rights and to prevent and resolve conflicts. It is safe to say that he was widely admired for his commitment to achieving our common global goals.

Our thoughts are with Ambassador Grunditz's family as we pay tribute to an inspiring person and his outstanding work. He will be remembered as a truly remarkable diplomat and valued friend. We will truly miss him.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, who will speak on behalf of the host country.

Ms. Power (United States of America): Mårten Grunditz's career as a diplomat spanned more than four decades. He was first posted as an attaché to the Swedish mission in Moscow in 1973, when it was still part of the Soviet Union. He went on to serve in Beijing, Washington, D.C., London, Geneva, Athens, and, of course, here in New York. He was a dexterous and deep diplomat.

Here at the United Nations, Ambassador Grunditz led the joint Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Fund for Population Activities and the United Nations Office for Project Services, where he pressed for far-reaching reforms, such as the public disclosure of internal audits. He also chaired the Liberia configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, sounding the alarm bell early and ardently for the international community to respond to the spreading Ebola outbreak. He was also determined to ensure that Liberia and its neighbours were built back better — so that what has befallen the people of that region never happened again.

Among the first impressions many of us had upon meeting Mårten was his sheer physical presence. He towered above virtually all of us. But the Ambassador's personality and the way he treated people had the opposite effect: it made him accessible, it brought him close. And that was not only the case for fellow ambassadors, but for everyone he interacted with, from the most junior intern to the most senior adviser, as well as to people of all walks and ranks at United Nations agencies and other missions.

A ranking diplomat on his staff who worked with Ambassador Grunditz for years observed that when he chaired meetings during his time at the head of the joint Executive Board he always made a point of thanking every secretary and member of the support staff who had helped organize the event. As this diplomat described it, Mårten Grunditz had, "an ability to recognize people".

Ambassador Grunditz also knew how to listen. In diplomatic settings, which can too often feel automated, he would actually stop and pay attention to people's opinions and arguments. He would engage people, ask questions, probe. He treated everybody as if he had something to learn from them.

Those qualities not only made the Ambassador an exceptional human being, but also, of course, an exceptional diplomat. Knowing how to recognize people and how to listen to them defined the way he interacted with individuals at his postings around the world, with people in the General Assembly Hall, at the negotiating table and in leadership positions at the United Nations.

And those qualities also defined what the Ambassador believed in. A person who sees people as they are and knows how to hear them is a natural humanitarian and a natural defender of human rights — as Ambassador Grunditz certainly was, believing to his core that no individual should be treated differently because she is a woman, because of whom he or she loves, because of how he or she prays or because of where she is born.

It is also those qualities that made Mårten such a wonderful mentor to his staff. The respect with which he treated people at the Swedish Mission and in previous postings bred a deep loyalty and dedication in those who served under him. It is why, when the Swedish Mission put out a sign-up sheet for staffers to stand by his condolence book and receive visitors, the sheet filled up immediately, and multiple staffers showed up for each shift. It was their way of performing a final service to a man who had taught them so much and to stand in his honour.

I witnessed that dedication the day Mårten passed away. After a meeting hosted by Swedish Foreign Minister Wallström, a young Swedish diplomat walked me to the elevator. Her eyes filled up with tears and she said, "We cannot believe it. He was such a good man." How right she was. And how shaped she will be, always, by the time that she got to watch him in action and learn from him.

Ambassador Mårten Grunditz gave nearly his entire professional career to the Swedish Foreign Service. It gave him back not only a chance to defend his values and serve his nation, but also led him to his life partner, Maine, whom he met decades ago in the diplomatic corps and who is here with us today, along with one of the Ambassador's two children, Jenny.

As all of us in this line of work know, diplomacy is not a solo occupation. Our families serve with us; they weather the excessive hours and the stresses, and they sustain us. As Ambassador Grunditz's career spanned decades, so did his family's service alongside him. For that, we are so grateful to Maine, Jenny and of course to her son, Henrik, as well, and we hope that the immeasurable loss they must feel is softened ever so slightly by seeing the tremendous contribution Mårten made to his country, to the United Nations, to the causes he believed in and to all of us, who learned so much from his towering example.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden.

Mr. Thöresson (Sweden): Let me begin by thanking the President, the Secretary-General, the representatives of all regional groups and, not least, of the host country, for their very heartfelt and warm words of condolence to Ambassador Grunditz's family and to his colleagues at the Swedish Mission, who were all with us here this morning.

I would like to start my words of remembrance by turning to Ambassador Grunditz's family, dear Maine, Jenny and Henrik, who I am sure will be watching this on the webcast. They have lost a loving husband, father and grandfather. Words cannot describe the pain and agony they are feeling. They meant the world to Mårten. Although he sometimes tended to be a bit private, whenever he spoke about them — his beloved wife, his children and his lovely grandchildren — his eyes always glimmered with joy and pride.

I can only hope that they feel the immense love and respect that we, all his current and former colleagues and friends at the Swedish Mission, felt for Mårten. He was not only a distinguished, experienced and extremely skilful diplomat and ambassador, always creative and constructive, seeking consensus while standing firm on principles; he was also by his very nature a truly inspiring leader, always attentive, always compassionate and always supportive to every member of his staff. He saw us, each and every one, inspired us and made us grow. We will remember Mårten's calm demeanour, his friendly, generous personality, his great sense of humour and his thoughtful and open-minded character. He will be deeply missed by all of us.

Mårten Grunditz had a most distinguished career in the Swedish Foreign Service, which he joined in 1973. His early career took him to important posts, such as Beijing, Washington, D.C., Geneva and London. In 1998 he was appointed Deputy Director-General for European Affairs, which also made him responsible for the first-ever Swedish presidency of the European Union (EU), in 2001. As would be expected, he did everything right. The presidency was a huge success and led to a virtual boom in the EU's popularity in Swedish society. In 2002 Mårten Grunditz was appointed Swedish Ambassador to Greece, a post he enjoyed so much that he stayed for almost seven years. In 2009, however, it was time for Sweden's second presidency of the European Union. The Government once again wanted to rely on Ambassador Grunditz's skill and experience, and appointed him Secretary-General for the organization of the Swedish presidency. Needless to say, the presidency was again deemed a great success.

In 2010 Ambassador Grunditz was appointed Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations. That turned out to be a perfect match. His passion and advocacy for a stronger United Nations role in conflict resolution, peacebuilding and conflict prevention are well known. He was eagerly looking forward to taking over the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission this year. He was a staunch defender of human rights and international law. Ambassador Grunditz's 2012 chairmanship of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services clearly illustrated his strong commitment to advancing the global development agenda. Until the very end, he always pushed for an even stronger Swedish role in the United Nations, not least by working hard for a Swedish seat on the Security Council.

On behalf of Mårten's family, the Government of Sweden and all our colleagues at the Swedish Mission and in the residence, I would like to sincerely thank all those who have conveyed their warming and comforting words of condolence from all around the world, not least his many friends and colleagues present here in the General Assembly this morning.

I would like to end by quoting a short text by Reinhold Niebuhr that was cherished by both Mårten and Maine.

> "Nothing worth doing is completed in our lifetime; therefore we are saved by hope. Nothing true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore we are saved by faith. Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore we are saved by love."

Agenda item 136 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/69/722/Add.1, A/69/722/Add.2, A/69/722/Add.3 and A/69/722/Add.4)

The Acting President: Before we proceed, in keeping with established practice, I would like to draw the attention of the General Assembly to documents A/69/722/Add.1, A/69/722/Add.2, A/69/722/Add.3 and A/69/722/Add.4, in which the Secretary-General informs the President of the Assembly that since the issuance of his communication contained in document A/69/722, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Rwanda and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have made the payments necessary to reduce their arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter of the United Nations.

May I take it that the General Assembly takes due note of the information contained in these documents?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 112 (*continued*)

Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections

(d) Election of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Note by the Secretary-General (A/69/721)

The Acting President: By its decision 59/420, of 27 May 2005, the General Assembly, on the proposal of the Secretary-General, elected Mr. António Manuel de Oliveira Guterres as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for a period of five years beginning on 15 June 2005 and ending on 14 June 2010.

By its decision 64/419, of 22 April 2010, the General Assembly, on the proposal of the Secretary-General, re-elected Mr. António Manuel de Oliveira Guterres as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for a period of five years beginning on 15 June 2010 and ending on 14 June 2015.

Members will recall that by paragraph 9 of resolution 58/153, of 22 December 2003, the General Assembly decided to remove the temporal limitation on the continuation of the Office of the High Commissioner set out in 57/186 and to continue the Office until the refugee problem is solved.

In his note contained in document A/69/721, the Secretary-General proposes to the General Assembly that the term of office of Mr. Guterres be further extended for a period beginning on 15 June 2015 and ending on 31 December 2015.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to re-elect Mr. António Manuel de Oliveira Guterres as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for a period beginning on 15 June 2015 and ending on 31 December 2015?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: On behalf of the Assembly, I would like to congratulate Mr. Guterres on his re-election as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Mr. Çevik (Turkey): Turkey welcomes and supports the Secretary-General's proposal to extend the term of office of Mr. António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, until 31 December 2015. Since the number of people who have been displaced by force has now exceeded the numbers of those displaced during the Second World War, we have been collectively compelled to take urgent action to address the needs of displaced persons. In that regard, under the able leadership of High Commissioner Guterres, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) fills a central role in delivering assistance and providing guidance on how to address the needs of asylum-seekers, refugees and internally displaced and stateless persons.

Unfortunately, thanks to the forced displacements resulting from the tragedies in Syria and Iraq that are unfolding right across our borders, Turkey has become the country hosting the second-largest number of displaced people in the world. In response to the ongoing crisis in the region, we have taken important steps to ensure assistance, protection and durable solutions for the displaced people to whom we have opened our doors. We commend the work of UNHCR, including its office in Turkey, in responding to the protection and assistance needs of refugees and other persons of concern in Turkey and beyond its borders. As we have stressed in multiple forums, including the United Nations, Turkey expects the international community to help to shoulder this noble responsibility through a genuine sharing of the burden in an equitable and meaningful way.

As we prepare and expand our deliberations for the World Humanitarian Summit scheduled to take place in Istanbul in 2016, Member States, donors and host countries alike, as well as non-governmental organizations and international entities, including UNHCR, have an important role to play in shaping the future of humanitarian assistance. We would like to wish High Commissioner Guterres success in his very challenging duties during his remaining time at the helm of UNHCR, and to reiterate our support for its work.

Mr. Oh Joon (Republic of Korea): On behalf of the Republic of Korea, I would like to welcome the General Assembly's decision to extend the term of office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. António Guterres, until 31 December 2015.

My delegation is pleased with the decision, since the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea in Geneva, in his capacity as Chair of the Executive Committee of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), was the first to draw the issue to the attention of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General so that Mr. Guterres's term could be extended for six and a half months. Given the seriousness of the current state of the emergency humanitarian response, and considering that UNHCR's programme management and financial reporting requirements revolve around the calendar year, we are confident that this extension of Mr. Guterres's term is crucial to the smooth running of UNHCR, and we wish him continued success in carrying out his important duties.

Mr. Moura (Portugal): We welcome the extension of the term of office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. António Guterres. The Secretary-General's proposal constitutes recognition of the merit of Mr. Guterres in dealing with an issue of extreme importance and one that Portugal considers vital. We believe that his substantial knowledge, capacity and experience will be crucial to ensuring the success of the actions taken in this challenging position. Portugal greatly appreciates and is grateful for the wide support of all Member States for Mr. Guterres's good work, evident in today's election by acclamation in the General Assembly, as well as in the previous endorsement of all regional groups of the extension of his mandate, as proposed by the Secretary-General. We thank them and wish Mr. Guterres well.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker on this item. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (d) of agenda item 112?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 113 (*continued*)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(f) Appointment of members of the Committee on Conferences

Note by the Secretary-General (A/69/107)

The Acting President: Members will recall that, at its 64th plenary meeting, on 5 December 2014, the Assembly took note of the appointments of the Central African Republic, Namibia, Paraguay and the Russian Federation as members of the Committee on Conferences for a period of three years, beginning on 1 January 2015.

Members will also recall that two seats from Asia-Pacific States and one seat from Western European and other States, for a period beginning on the date of appointment and ending on 31 December 2017, remain vacant.

On the recommendation of the Chair of the Western European and other States, the President of the General Assembly has appointed France as a member of the Committee on Conferences for a term of office beginning on 2 February 2015 and ending on 31 December 2017.

May I take it that the Assembly takes note of this appointment?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Regarding the two remaining vacant seats from the Asia-Pacific States, I urge the group to submit their candidatures as soon as possible.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (f) of agenda item 113.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.

United Nations A/69/PV.80

General Assembly
Sixty-ninth session

Official Records

80th plenary meeting

Thursday, 26 February 2015, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kutesa .... (Uganda)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 9 and 13 (*continued*)

Report of the Economic and Social Council

Report of the Economic and Social Council (A/69/3/Rev.1)

Draft resolution (A/69/L.53)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

(a) Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

The President: In connection with agenda item 9, I would like to recall that, pursuant to resolution 58/316, of 1 July 2004, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 19 September 2014, to consider agenda item 9 in its entirety in plenary, on the understanding that the administrative, programme and budgetary aspects should be dealt with by the Fifth Committeee. At the same meeting, the Assembly took note of the clarification that, in implementing resolution 58/316 to consider agenda item 9 in its entirety in plenary, the relevant parts of chapter I of the report that deal with agenda items already allocated to the Main Committees would be considered by the Committee concerned for final action by the General Assembly.

In connection with sub-item (a) of agenda item 13, members will recall that, pursuant to resolution 57/270 B, the Assembly decided to consider, under the item, the chapters of the annual report of the Economic and Social Council relevant to the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, including through the participation in its discussions of the President of the Council.

Under agenda item 9, the Assembly has before it the report of the Economic and Social Council circulated in document A/69/3/Rev.1. Under the same item, the Assembly also has before it a draft resolution entitled, “A global geodetic reference frame for sustainable development”, issued as document A/69/L.53.

Permit me now to make a brief statement.

The report before us synthesizes the significant accomplishments of the Economic and Social Council realized through the course of last year. It also shows the ongoing implementation of the Council’s reform. The substantive theme chosen for the 2014 session, “Addressing ongoing and emerging challenges for meeting the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 and for sustaining development gains in the future”, was most important and pertinent. It provided specific focus as the Economic and Social Council continues to enhance its contribution to the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the post-2015 development agenda. The Council’s work in this area will be invaluable as we move forward with the negotiations on the new development agenda.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

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The 2014 Economic and Social Council session yielded several other important outcomes, including the decision to enhance global cooperation in providing technical assistance for the development of a global reference frame which can contribute to more accurate measuring of the changing planet, with potential economic and environmental benefits. In addition to its traditional operational activities and humanitarian segments, the Council also held the first meeting of its integration segment last year, focusing on the important issue of sustainable urbanization. The Council's high-level segment in 2014 was successful and hosted the important meeting of the Development Cooperation Forum, the high-level policy dialogue with international financial and trade institutions and the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. The joint meetings of the Economic and Social Council and the Second Committee also provided useful insights on several topics, including the sovereign debt crisis and the renewed global partnership for development. These meetings also promoted a spirit of coherence and coordination in our work.

As the Assembly well knows, the year 2015 will be a landmark for the United Nations, particularly for those directly involved with sustainable-development issues. Resolution 68/1 recognized the leading role of the Economic and Social Council in identifying emerging challenges and promoting reflection, debate and innovative thinking on development. In this context, the Council's work continues to provide an invaluable contribution towards our efforts to formulate an integrated and unified development framework, as well as to the advancement of stronger linkages among the activities of the United Nations system.

Going forward, we will need greater emphasis on the role of the High-level Political Forum in the follow-up and review of the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. This will require even greater and stronger coordination and cooperation between the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. I look forward to continued collaboration between the Assembly and the Council throughout the current session.

I now give the floor to the President of the Economic and Social Council, His Excellency Mr. Martin Sajdik, to introduce the report of the Council.

Mr. Sajdik (Austria), President of the Economic and Social Council: It is an honour to introduce the 2014 report of the Economic and Social Council, contained in document A/69/3/Rev.1, to the General Assembly. Before introducing the report, I would like to profoundly thank my colleagues in the Bureau of the Council: Ms. María Emma Mejía Vélez of Colombia, Mr. Vladimir Drobnjak of Croatia, Mr. Oh Joon of the Republic of Korea, and Mr. Mohamed Khaled Khiari of Tunisia. I would also like to thank the previous members of the Bureau, Ibrahim Dabbashi of Libya and Mr. Carlos Enrique García González of El Salvador.

This is a historic time. The international community continues to accelerate its efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and the crafting of the post-2015 development agenda is in full swing. The universality of the post-2015 development agenda signifies that the agenda will have a global reach, applicable to all countries. Universality is also recognition of the growing interdependence in today's world. The principle of integration will be at the core of the post-2015 development agenda. Integration is also at the centre of the work of the the Economic and Social Council system, at both the conceptual and analytical levels of policy, as well as in its implementation. The Assembly's discussion today of the Council's 2014 report offers an opportunity to engage in a reflection on the substantive policy guidance of the Economic and Social Council system.

The year 2014 was the first year of the new Economic and Social Council, arising from the General Assembly's strengthening of the Council. The Assembly initiated a year-and-a-half transitional cycle that will culminate in the Council's high-level segment this July. The transitional period is stretched over 18 months. I am honoured to be presiding over the Council for this entire period.

The new Economic and Social Council is the most important instrument at the intergovernmental level for pursuing the twin objectives of eradicating poverty and achieving the integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. The year 2014 was the first in which the Council convened its new platforms, including the convening of the High-level Political Forum under the auspices of the Council and the new integration segment. These were pursued together with the full range of the Council's existing platforms and processes, including the Development Cooperation Forum, the Financing for Development follow-up process, the work of the Council's functional commissions and expert bodies, the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review follow-up process, and the Economic and Social Council Dialogue on the Longer-term Positioning of the United Nations Development System.

The Economic and Social Council is now well on its way to be fit for purpose for the post-2015 development agenda. All of its instruments have their own distinctive roles, interplay and division of labour. Taken together, they are ready to advance ownership, engagement, implementation and follow-up and review at the global level. I believe that the whole of the Economic and Social Council system, including the High-level Political Forum, can and will deliver better results for humankind.

In 2014, the Council supported the transition to the post-2015 development agenda through the main theme of "Addressing ongoing and emerging challenges for meeting the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 and for sustaining development gains in the future". The Economic and Social Council system considered the theme throughout its work during the 2014 session, culminating in the Council's high-level segment and the ministerial-level High-level Political Forum in July. The meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, held under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, addressed key aspects of that transition through its aligned theme, "Achieving the Millennium Development Goals and charting the way for an ambitious post-2015 development agenda, including the sustainable development goals".

The Economic and Social Council also addressed the 2014 theme and the transition to the post-2015 development agenda through its segments and forums, including the Development Cooperation Forum and the Financing for Development follow-up process. The related theme of the 2014 integration segment was "Sustainable Urbanization". The segment brought together Member States, the Economic and Social Council system, civil society and the business and philanthropic sectors to focus on its economic, social and environmental dimensions.

(*spoke in French*)

In 2014, the Economic and Social Council afforded various development players an opportunity to join forces to drive forward sustainable. To do that it carried out the following actions: a review of the 2014 theme, including obstacles to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and sustaining gains in future, particularly through national voluntary presentations from various countries; facilitating the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development in sustainable urbanization; initiating a dialogue on ways to ensure that the United Nations development system can adapt its activities more effectively and efficiently to the evolving development landsacpe; achieving progress in the area of development cooperation by focusing on priority issues for action with a view to achieving concrete results; considering jointly with the General Assembly the role and features of multistakeholder partnerships in implementing a post-2015 development agenda; enabling youth, who represent one quarter of the world's population, to participate in the international dialogue on development; tackling the Ebola crisis and linking the emergency Ebola response in West Africa to longer-term endeavours to strengthen health systems; and strengthening the coordination of the humanitarian assistance provided by United Nations bodies.

I am especially pleased that discussions on humanitarian affairs have been an essential part of the Economic and Social Council since 1998, giving a humanitarian dimension to the work of the United Nations.

The Council also launched an open and inclusive dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the United Nations development system, the primary objective being to make the system fit for purpose and ready to support the implementation of a universal and unified development agenda. That is another area where the Council could potentially show the way forward.

(*spoke in Russian*)

The Economic and Social Council will continue to make efforts to advance a rights-based approach to sustainable development, the rule of law and access to justice, as well as to strengthen implementation and review. The Economic and Social Council provides a global platform for bringing together all stakeholders and advancing an integrated approach to the development of a unified and universal agenda. The Economic and Social Council serves as a unifying platform for our substantive areas of work, as well as between national and global development action.

The Economic and Social Council's unifying platform includes the work of the entire Economic and Social Council system, including the functional and regional commissions and various expert bodies, and the newly established High-level Political Forum, which covers a broad range of substantive areas. The

Economic and Social Council system is an interlocking framework that connects functional and regional commissions, expert bodies and specialized agencies. They all have clear, distinctive roles and divisions of labour. Thanks to the recent strengthening of the Economic and Social Council by the General Assembly, we now have a main, annual theme to guide and support harmonized, coordinated and integrated work within the Economic and Social Council system.

We need to ensure that the individual follow-up processes are aligned and facilitate coherent and unified implementation in terms of analysis and policy. The annual theme of the Economic and Social Council serves to align and connect the broad analytical work of the Economic and Social Council system, culminating in the high-level segment. The High-level Political Forum, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, also aligns its theme with the annual theme of the Council.

We have an important and challenging task before us. In the post-2015 era, we must mobilize our common resources and energy to face our two major challenges, namely, the fate of humankind and the fate of our planet. We have a shared responsibility for doing so. In order to provide strategic, substantive guidance, the United Nations needs a strong General Assembly and Economic and Social Council system.

Today's dialogue, informed by the 2014 report of the Economic and Social Council, moves us forward in our quest for sustainable development and a world without poverty. The Assembly can count on me and the entire Economic and Social Council system to facilitate our work and the implementation of that common vision.

The President: I thank the President of the Economic and Social Council for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Fiji to introduce draft resolution A/69/L.53.

Mr. Thomson (Fiji): I cannot repeat the impressive linguistic feats of the President of the Economic and Social Council, unless the interpreters understand the Fijian language — in which case I could speak a bit of Fijian.

It is my honour this morning, on behalf of its 44 sponsors, to introduce draft resolution A/69/L.53, entitled "A global geodetic reference frame for sustainable development", under agenda item 9, entitled "Report of the Economic and Social Council".

The delegation of Fiji wishes to first thank all Member States for their support throughout the consultation process. By way of introduction, the draft resolution before the Assembly stems from the texts previously adopted by the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management and by the Economic and Social Council in August and November, respectively, last year. The current text preserves the essence of what the Committee of Experts had intended for this initiative, namely, to leverage the importance of a globally coordinated approach to geodesy based on the premise of equitably measuring the location, shape, rotation and gravitational field of the planet. As the planet revolves in constant motion, a point of reference is needed. Geodesy provides that through an accurate and stable coordinate reference frame to relate measurements taken at different times and locations. Recognizing that no one country can do that alone, a common global geodetic reference frame will enable multilateral cooperation in geodesy, including through the open sharing of geospatial data, further capacity-building in developing countries and the establishment of international standards and conventions.

We take this opportunity to emphasize the important role played by the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management, which the Economic and Social Council established in 2011 to develop the proposed road map that will establish the common global geodetic reference frame. The information to be derived from this important work will benefit the international community's development work, as it will be fundamental to satellite remote sensing, by which changes in populations, ice caps, oceans and the atmosphere can be tracked over time. Such geospatial measurements will support sustainable development policy-making, climate change monitoring and natural-disaster management, and will also have a wide range of applications for transport, agriculture and construction.

As a small island developing State, Fiji is vulnerable to increasingly severe natural disasters, sea-level rise and other problems triggered by climate change. We use geodetic data for our disaster preparedness action plans, and greatly appreciate the importance of critical geospatial infrastructure and information in helping countries such as ours make more informed evidence-based decisions on mitigation and preparedness.

Furthermore, as a troop-contributing country to United Nations peacekeeping missions, we believe that increased accuracy and sustainable geospatial information will ensure that Blue Helmets operate with more reliable evidence-based data, thereby leading to greater effectiveness in United Nations peacekeeping missions.

In this critical year of determining the global course of action to improve people's lives and protect the planet for the next 15 years, the adoption of this draft resolution will do its bit to enable us to achieve the goals of the post-2015 development agenda. Practical solutions and international cooperation will be integral to the achievement of the sustainable development goals, and the establishment of the global geodetic reference frame for sustainable development will be a trustworthy tool in helping deliver those solutions in a spirit of international cooperation.

Finally, the delegation of Fiji wishes to thank all Member States that have sponsored this draft resolution for their support throughout. We look forward to its adoption.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Ms. Klausa (European Union): The European Union (EU) and its member States would like to thank the President of the Economic and Social Council for introducing the Council's report (A/69/3/Rev.1). We commend the work of the Council during the reporting period and recognize the leadership of its President, Mr. Martin Sajdik of Austria, as well as the dedication of the entire Bureau. We would also like to acknowledge with gratitude the support that the Secretariat provided to the Council.

We are very much aware of the challenges faced by the presidency of the Economic and Social Council, the Bureau and the Secretariat during this period of transition and reform. We have seem much progress over the past year. We should strive to build upon that progress to make the Economic and Social Council even more relevant, effective and efficient. In this particularly important year, which will include ongoing discussions on, inter alia, the post-2015 development agenda, financing for development, and climate change, which of course are of great interest and significance to the Economic and Social Council system, the EU and its member States will actively participate in and support the work and activities of the Council.

Mr. Mackay (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Belarus is convinced that the Economic and Social Council is uniquely endowed with the capacity for integrated consideration of all aspects of sustainable development. It is the key United Nations forum for developing collective approaches to address the inherent socioeconomic problems of the future sustainable development goals, having shown its relevance during debates on the new development agenda.

At the first meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, last year, Member States shared their vision of the difficulties inherent in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and possible solutions. Belarus hopes that the Forum will become an additional opportunity for Member States to fully participate in discussions on strategic development issues of development, and that it will help to boost interaction between the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council in that regard.

We need to discuss issues of interest to all categories of States, including middle-income States, in the Forum. The success and experience of middle-income countries should assist the transition of the least-developed countries to a higher development category. Efforts are needed not only from the States themselves,but the international community as well, to promote sustainable development in middle-income countries. We will work with interested countries so that this topic has a place on the United Nations and Economic and Social Council agenda.

Our delegation supports the process of strengthening cooperation between the Economic and Social Council and the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, with a view to finding joint ways to implement the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the future development agenda. We anticipate that joint decisions will be geared to developing practical steps to ensure the sustainability of the global economy overall, and national economies in particular.

Moreover, we need to reflect on how to implement the often-heard proposal to establish a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council for financing for development. It is very important that the resources pledged by developed countries and confirmed by the

Monterrey Consensus become a reliable factor in the financing system.

Alhough official development assistance adds to the internal resources of recipient countries, the mobilization of those resources cannot fully eliminate the need for the former. We should be alarmed by the growing tendency to de-emphasize the importance of official development assistance. At the same time, a number of States are forced to address development issues while also facing the application of unilateral economic, trade or other financial measures that contradict the norms of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and also hinder the full implementation of the internationally agreed MDGs.

We would look forward to finding a long-term solution to the issue of financing the agenda in the post-2015 period at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Addis Ababa.

Mr. Drobnjak (Croatia): It is an honour to speak on the introduction of the 2014 report of the Economic and Social Council to the General Assembly (A/69/3/Rev.1). First and foremost, I wish to thank the President of the Economic and Social Council, Ambassador Sajdik, and my colleagues on the Council's Bureau and in the Secretariat for our collaborative work. I would like to highly commend their efforts. It is a true pleasure working with them.

The General Assembly, in its recent strengthening of the Economic and Social Council, decided that the Council would adopt an annual main theme that will serve as its guiding substantive focus. The theme will serve to support harmonized, coordinated and integrated work within the Economic and Social Council system, so I think that we need to ensure that the work of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council together provides substantive policy guidance and contributes to and facilitates the coherent, unified implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.

We are pleased to see that the entire Economic and Social Council system is now aligning, to the extent possible, its work to the main theme of the Economic and Social Council. This connects the analytical work of the Economic and Social Council system to the high-level segment and the High-level Political Forum when it is convened under the auspices of the Council.

The report before us is an important one, and this is an important year. The year 2015 has tremendous transformative potential and power for reasons we all know, and the Economic and Social Council has a fitting place in it. Croatia, as a member of the Economic and Social Council, is responsible for streamlining the work of the integration segment, so I should like to say a few words on that matter.

In 2014, the integration segment was still a novel part of the work of the Economic and Social Council, but we successfully organized and conducted meetings on sustainable urbanization. The integration segment quickly proved to be worthy and relevant. This year, the integration segment will take place from 30 March to 1 April, and will address the issue of employment, with a focus on the creation of decent work for all. I look forward to another rich debate that will once again demonstrate the unbreakable synergy between the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development.

Finally, I would like to end by once again commending the President of the Economic and Social Council, Ambassador Sajdik, for his efforts and the results achieved under his able guidance.

Mr. Oh Joon (Republic of Korea): My delegation welcomes the 2014 annual report of the Economic and Social Council (A/69/3/Rev.1). We would like to commend the leadership of Ambassador Martin Sajdik, President of the Economic and Social Council, and also express our appreciation for the Secretariat's support during this period of transition, which is part of the strengthening of the Council.

The Economic and Social Council is now mandated to serve as the platform for the coordination of global, regional and national development activities and to connect the individual, follow-up and review processes in order to optimize mutual reinforcements across the development agenda as a whole. We believe that the efforts made for further integration during this transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the sustainable development goals will serve to make the Economic and Social Council fit for its role in the implementation of the transformative and universal development agenda.

We have learned from many discussions that a transformative and ambitious post-2015 development agenda can be achieved only through a genuine partnership engaging different development actors. In that regard, we need to utilize the strength and expertise of the Economic and Social Council, which arise from its collaboration with its subsidiary bodies, including the functional and regional commissions. As the Council's President indicated, 2014 saw the introduction of the new Economic and Social Council, and new platforms have been introduced into the work of the Council.

Looking back at the major developments throughout the work of the Economic and Social Council in 2014, the new integration segment and the High-level Political Forum, under the Council's auspices, are especially noteworthy. The first-ever integration segment in 2014 provided a unique platform for Member States, the United Nations system, civil society and other stakeholders to promote effective collaboration among them and, in particular, to focus on how to achieve sustainable urbanization by incorporating the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. The High-level Political Forum, which met under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council last year, represents an important reform that offers a new multilateral architecture to respond to sustainable development challenges.

As a member of the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council, I have experienced first-hand the positive impact of the Council's work. My delegation is pleased to be able to count on the entire Economic and Social Council system to bring together all development actors for the achievement of the sustainable development goals and the successful implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. The Republic of Korea reaffirms its commitment to our common endeavours in that regard.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/69/L.53, entitled "A global geodetic reference frame for sustainable development".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Zhang Saijin (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I would like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have become sponsors of A/69/L.53: Austria, the Bahamas, Costa Rica, Guyana, Iceland, Indonesia, Italy and Serbia.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/69/L.53?

Draft resolution A/69/L.53 was adopted (resolution 69/266).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to take note of the report of the Economic and Social Council contained in document A/69/3/Rev.1?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 9 and sub-item (a) of agenda item 13.

Agenda item 129

Seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War

Draft resolution (A/69/L.52)

The President: I give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation to introduce draft resolution A/69/L.52.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation): The delegation of the Russian Federation has the honour to introduce on its own behalf, and on behalf of a large group of sponsors, the draft resolution contained in document A/69/L.52, entitled "Seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War".

This year we will celebrate the commemoration of a famous date — the seventieth anniversary of the great victory of the Second World War. It was a war unprecedented in its scope and cruelty, and one that turned into a terrible tragedy for the peoples of the entire world. Our quest to spare future generations from the tragedy of a war that brought great grief and suffering to people helped us establish the United Nations and today's system of international relations. The very term "United Nations" first appeared in the years of the Second World War. The States of the anti-Hitler alliance called themselves that. With great effort and at great cost, 70 years ago we managed to repel that terrible threat to the very foundation of civilization. We cannot forget the price we paid or the horrendous atrocities of the Nazis and their accomplices in the Second World War.

The international criminal justice system that was established after the war made it possible to judge the many crimes against humanity and war crimes that had been committed. Time has demonstrated the correctness and great significance of that judgement. However complex and acute the challenges since the end of the Second World War have been, honouring the deeds of the people of all countries who courageously fought against fascism and militarism is a duty to cherish. Ours was a common victory that we are not only entitled to, but must be proud of. Our common obligation is to remember the bitter lessons of the war and to help keep its memories alive, not to allow for historical revisionism or attempts to rewrite it.

Draft resolution A/69/L.52 continues the United Nations tradition of celebrating the anniversary of the end of the Second World War. We are maintaining the tradition of broad sponsorship by Member States representing all regions of the world. We hope that we will also maintain the tradition of unanimously adopting the draft resolution.

Paragraph 1 of the draft resolution calls on all Member States, organizations of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and individuals to observe these days in an appropriate manner to pay tribute to all victims of the Second World War. Paragraph 2 is a request to hold a special solemn meeting of the United Nations in the second week of May 2015 in commemoration of all victims of the war. We would suggest holding that meeting on 5 or 6 May.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Van Den Akker (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States. The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

Soon we will commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, a tragic chapter in the history of Europe and of the whole world. Our consideration of draft resolution A/69/L.52 is a fitting way for us to mark this commemoration. We should never forget the horrors of the past and the cruelty of war to prevent ourselves from repeating them. We have the responsibility of ensuring that such atrocities will never reoccur. We also have to remember the sacrifices made and mourn all the people who lost their lives as victims of the war, the Holocaust, occupations and acts of repression. We believe that historical awareness is a necessary step in preventing similar crimes in the future.

The United Nations should be conceived of as having the aim of preserving international peace and security. In its very Preamble, the Charter of the United Nations talks of

> "We the peoples of the United Nations, determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind".

However, we remain very conscious of the fact that it is not just the two world wars that have brought untold sorrow to humankind over the past 100 years. Unfortunately, our efforts for peace have failed too often. The European Union and its member States have pledged to work with all the States Members of the United Nations to lift those scourges and to create a more peaceful, just and prosperous world for future generations.

At the same time, we note with regret that many current crises remain unresolved. Therefore, the anniversary must remind us of our commitment to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or sovereignty of any State. Also, it should lead us to redouble our efforts to settle disputes by peaceful means. The European Union and its member States are deeply committed to the core principles outlined in the Charter, and we firmly believe that there is no place for the use of force or coercion to change internationally recognized borders in Europe or elsewhere in the twenty-first century.

We pay our earnest tribute to the historic role of the allied forces and their sacrifices in the defeat of Nazism during the Second World War. However, we should likewise remember that the Second World War brought about painful divisions in Europe and that for many European countries the end of the Second World War brought not freedom but more crimes against humanity committed against their people.

We need to overcome the legacies of the war and build on the progress made since the end of the Second World War in promoting democratic values, human rights and fundamental freedoms. When it comes to commemoration, we should pay tribute to the women and men who fought for liberty and peace. They should inspire us to look forward with hope and to redouble our efforts for peace and understanding. Today, we, the States Members of the United Nations, must play this crucial role together.

The European Union and its member States believe that an honest and thorough debate on history will facilitate reconciliation based on truth and remembrance. We therefore appreciate this draft resolution, as it contributes to preserving the memory of the victims of one of the darkest episodes of our history.

Mr. Prosor (Israel): Seventy years ago, the roar of the guns fell quiet over Europe, and the Second World War came to a close. Today, as we mourn the human tragedy of that war, we must also recognize those who made victory possible and ensured that freedom triumphed over tyranny. We owe our freedom to the courage and sacrifices of the soldiers of the Allied armies.

I stand before the Assembly as a man who has seen and experienced war as a soldier and a diplomat and the father of children who themselves have been sent to war. I also speak today as the son of a man who fled Nazi Germany to escape the annihilation of his people. In his novel *The Young Lions*, Irwin Shaw describes the incomprehensible horror of the Second World War:

> "This time it is not a simple, understandable war ... This time it is an assault of the animal world upon the house of the human being ... I know what I saw in Russia and Poland ... A cemetery a thousand miles long and a thousand miles wide. Men, women, children, Poles, Russians, Jews, it made no difference. It could not be compared to any human action."

More than 60 million people — 3 per cent of the world's population — were killed or murdered in the Second World War. Half of the victims were civilians. Men were forced from their farms and fields and sent to the battlefields. Women were torn from their families and sent to hard-labour camps. Countless young girls and boys were denied the most basic right: the right to grow up and grow old. The scope of the human tragedy is simply unfathomable.

The sacrifices were immense — Russia alone lost over 25 million people. The Russian people faced the harsh forces of nature. They looked the brutal enemy in the eye. They pushed forward to conquer Berlin and halted the Nazi advancement. They fought so that peoples and nations could live in freedom. When history and circumstances called for bravery, they answered the call. Throughout the war, every news broadcast in Russia started with the following phrase: "The enemy will be stopped, and we shall prevail." Thanks to its courage and conviction, Russia was indeed victorious.

But there was no one country that could alone stop the monstrous Nazi killing machine. President Roosevelt's decision to send American forces and troops to fight for freedom changed the course of history. Fighting shoulder to shoulder with Winston Churchill's Great Britain was a courageous decision. Without the alliance between the United States, Great Britain, Russia, France and other countries, and the bravery of the Allied soldiers, the trajectory of civilization would have been terribly different.

On 25 April 1945, soldiers from the Soviet 58th Guards Rifle Division and the American 69th Infantry met at the Elbe River. That historic meeting of East and West signalled the end of long and bloody campaigns by the Allied Powers to turn back Nazi Germany's unprecedented aggression against Europe and humankind. Two weeks later the war in Europe was over, and six years of death and destruction finally came to an end.

Seventy years ago, in Europe's darkest hour, a third of the world's Jews were killed in the Nazi Holocaust. As Elie Wiesel once said, "not all victims were Jews, but all Jews were victims". The magnitude of the destruction is simply unparalleled. We cannot comprehend the riches of the mind lost to us by the destruction of Einstein's Berlin or Kafka's Prague. The tragedy of the Shoah is a stain on the conscience of humankind, a mockery of the very concept of a civilized world, never ever to be forgotten. The elimination of Jews from the face of Europe was not a means to further a goal, it was the goal itself.

In the darkest hours, Allied nations kindled the light of liberty. American and British forces bravely fought back the Germans on the Western front and, in the East, the 322nd Rifle Division of the Russian Army liberated the Auschwitz death camp. The steel of the Allied spirit proved to be mightier than the steel of the tanks and guns they faced. Thanks to them, the flame of liberty continues to burn brightly.

Today we are here to confirm that the responsibility for preventing atrocities rests on our shoulders. Seventy years ago, with the ashes of the Second World War still smouldering, the victors of the war came together to establish the United Nations and ensure that "never again" would not be a hollow promise. Today the values at the very heart of this institution are being threatened by extremist ideologies that target our way of life. From West Africa to the Middle East, extremist groups have unleashed a plague of persecution, believing that by silencing individuals they can silence civilization.

The terrorists that stormed the *Charlie Hebdo* office in Paris attacked liberty — the right of every person to express himself or herself. The terrorists that targeted Jews in Paris and Copenhagen attacked equality — the idea that every person, no matter one's faith, is equal. By aiming their attacks at innocent civilians, the terrorists also attacked brotherhood — the bonds of our shared humankind. Make no mistake — freedom is under attack throughout the whole world. A war is being waged against human dignity and human rights, and we must fight back. Standing united with courage and conviction, we can turn back the tide of violent extremism and safeguard the values we cherish.

Peace and security is also threatened by Iran, the world's foremost sponsor of terrorism. That radical theocracy is working tirelessly to advance its nuclear capabilities, while explicitly threatening to eradicate Israel from the face of the Earth. But let me be perfectly clear: what is at stake is not just the security of Israel, it is the security and stability of the entire world. Consider what the world would look like if Iran were allowed to proceed. A nuclear Iran will set off an arms race in the Middle East. It will provide a nuclear umbrella that would protect terrorist groups, allowing them to act with increasing impunity. That is not the world the men and women who fought victoriously 70 years ago would have hoped for.

The Second World War taught us that the costs of inaction are simply too high to bear. It is the reason this institution exists, and it is the obligation that we must live up to. Each and every one of us has a role to play in the struggle for human rights and human dignity. We must overcome indifference. We must know what we stand for — and then stand up for what we believe in — we never indulge racism, never ignore incitement and are never silent when confronted with the warnings of war.

From the Assembly I issue a warning to the world. Do not close your eyes to the atrocities around you. Do not turn away from the animosity that ensues. It is your responsibility to speak out against hatred clearly and unequivocally. Equip the next generation with words, not weapons. Arm them with ideas, not radical ideologies. Teach them tolerance, not terrorism. War is not inevitable. It is not a force of nature, nor is it part of human nature. It can be prevented, but only if we stand together to denounce indifference and defend peace.

I would like to finish with a quote from General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers in the South-West Pacific, who said:

> "It is my earnest hope, and indeed the hope of all mankind, that from this solemn occasion a better world shall emerge out of the blood and carnage of the past — a world founded upon faith and understanding, a world dedicated to the dignity of man and the fulfilment of his most cherished wish for freedom, tolerance and justice."

The duty rests upon us. If we wish our children to live in a world built on freedom, tolerance and justice, then we must stand united to defend those values.

Mr. Dapkiunas (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of its many sponsors, including Belarus, the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation clearly and convincingly introduced today draft resolution A/69/L.52, which we are about to adopt.

Speaking on behalf of a country that stood at the epicentre of the Second World War, with grief and the pain of loss embedded in our national memory, I hope that this draft resolution will not be perceived as a ritual document or a mere nod to tradition. The text of the draft resolution may indeed be similar to resolution 59/26, which the General Assembly adopted 10 years ago. However, the degree to which focusing on this watershed moment in world history is sorely needed is greater today than ever.

There is a need for a focus on the wisdom of the statesmen who found within themselves the strength to overcome ideological and political differences and to unite their countries to battle a misanthropic ideology — a focus on the heroism and courage of everyday people at the front and at the rear, and a desire to understand its origins; a focus that is not the result of mere curiosity or interest in history; a focus that stems not only from considerations for decency, but from a wish to understand how the lessons of a bygone war may help us to avoid tragic and irreparable mistakes in the future.

Today, from this rostrum, I would like to appeal to States Members of the United Nations to try to understand that this is not just another anniversary. An extraordinary meeting of the General Assembly will be held at the start of May. It will, first and foremost, allow us to observe a minute of silence to grieve and ponder how we can manage to come together in a spirit of cooperation, empathy, compassion and awareness of our responsibility for our shared home on Earth before the first salvos in a new war are heard.

Mr. Zhao Yong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting.

Seventy years ago the Second World War brought an unprecedented catastrophe to all humankind. Through great hardship and struggle, we emerged victorious in the world antifascist war, justice finally defeated evil, and peace came to the world. China was an important member of the world antifascist alliance and the site of the main battlefield in the East. The war in China was the earliest to break out and lasted the longest. The Chinese people made an important contribution to the world people's antifascist war.

This year is the seventieth anniversary of the anti-Fascist war, as well as of the establishment of the United Nations, and the United Nations will hold a series of events to commemorate this important historical occasion. Three days ago, at China's initiative, the Security Council convened a public debate (see S/PV.7389) to discuss the issue of the maintenance of international peace and security, and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi himself came to New York to preside over the meeting. Member States responded positively to this initiative, with more than 80 countries participating and supporting our discussions on the subject.

The meeting had two clear messages for the outside world. First, the international community must use history as a mirror and reaffirm its commitment to maintaining the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Secondly, as we go forward, we must find a way to effectively maintain international peace and security in the new environment. This meeting embodies the consensus of the world community on the purposes and principles of the Charter and is the prelude to the commemoration of the victory of the world antifascist war and the founding of the United Nations. The aforementioned public debate of the Security Council was an event of the same kind as the special meeting of the General Assembly on the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War to be held in May and the commemorative meeting of the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations to be held in September, which together constitute the main events for the celebration of the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations and the winning of the world antifascist war. China expects the General Assembly to adopt the draft resolution commemorating the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War. It is our hope that Member States will actively participate in the commemorative activities, jointly recall the lessons of history and look to the future.

We must remember the commitment to face and remember history, treasure peace and never again resort to war, in order to truly realize the grand blueprint depicted in the Charter of the United Nations and by establishing a new type of international relationship based on win-win cooperation, making our world more peaceful and even better.

Mr. Samvelian (Armenia): Armenia greatly values draft resolution A/69/L.52, which proposes the framework for the commemoration of the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War. We would like to stress that the draft resolution unequivocally recognizes the central role of international cooperation and of the United Nations in safeguarding peace. It also calls on Member States to refrain from the use of force in any manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.

With due respect to the founding document of the Organization, we must take appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace and develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, in line with the purposes enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Okamura (Japan): This year we commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War. Seventy years ago, the United Nations was created for the purposes and principles enumerated in the Charter. As such, it is important for us to reaffirm that all the purposes and principles are of equal importance as we head towards the future.

Throughout its post-war history, based on feelings of deep remorse with regard to the Second World War, and through upholding all the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, Japan has walked the path of a peace-loving nation that contributes to the peace and security of the world. We are a country that has consistently shown respect for freedom, democracy, the rule of law and human rights. Our path as a peace-loving nation will never change.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/69/L.52, entitled "Seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War".

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Zhang Saijin (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I would like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/69/L.52: Andorra, Armenia, Australia, Austria, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Colombia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Guatemala, Guyana, Hungary, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Jordan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Monaco, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, the Philippines, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, San Marino, Slovakia, Spain, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/69/L.52.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/69/L.52?

Draft resolution A/69/L.52 was adopted (resolution 69/267).

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 129.

Agenda item 113 (*continued*)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments.

(g) Appointment of members of the Joint Inspection Unit

Note by the Secretary-General (A/69/106)

The President: Members will recall that, at its 55th plenary meeting, on 18 November 2014, the Assembly selected Canada, Germany and Romania to propose candidates for appointment to the Joint Inspection Unit for a five-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2016.

Members will also recall that, at the request of the Chair of the African Group for the month of November 2014, the Assembly postponed the selection of the country to propose a candidate for the seat allocated to the African States. For the one vacancy from among the African States, there are two candidates, namely, Ethiopia and Morocco.

As indicated in paragraph 2 of document A/69/106, the General Assembly, by its resolution 61/238, decided that, beginning on 1 January 2008, the President of the General Assembly, when drawing up the list of countries in accordance with article 3, paragraph 1, of the statute of the Unit, will invite Member States to submit the names of the countries and their respective candidates simultaneously, on the understanding that the candidates submitted would be the candidates that the respective Member States intended to propose, to the extent possible, for appointment by the Assembly, in accordance with article 3, paragraph 2, of the statute.

Since, from among the African States, there are two candidates for one vacancy, I should like, in accordance with past practice, to consult with Member States through the procedure of holding an advisory vote by secret ballot, to select one country from among the African States to be requested to propose a candidate for appointment to the Joint Inspection Unit. Although that advisory vote would not be an election, we would follow the rules of procedure of the Assembly governing elections.

If there is no objection, may I take it that the General Assembly agrees to that procedure?

It was so decided.

The President: In accordance with existing practice, the country receiving the greatest number of votes and not less than a majority of the votes of those present and voting, shall be the country selected to propose a candidate for appointment to the Joint Inspection Unit.

May I also take it that the General Assembly agrees to that procedure?

It was so decided.

The President: In the case of a tie vote, there will be a restricted ballot limited to the candidates who have obtained an equal number of votes.

May I take it that the Assembly also agrees to that procedure?

It was so decided.

The President: May I remind members that the Assembly is not appointing members to the Joint Inspection Unit at this time. It is only selecting one country to be requested to propose a candidate. Therefore, only the name of one country, and not the name of an individual, should appear on the ballot paper.

I should now like to repeat that for the one vacancy from among the African States, there are two candidates, namely, Ethiopia and Morocco. I should further like to point out that, from the African States, the Gambia already has a national serving on the Joint Inspection Unit whose term of office ends on 31 December 2017. The name of that State therefore should not appear on the ballot paper.

The Assembly will now proceed to the selection of one country from among the African States to be requested to propose a candidate to fill the vacancy in the Joint Inspection Unit.

Before we begin the voting process, I should like to remind members that, pursuant to rule 88 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, no representative shall interrupt the voting except on a point of order on the actual conduct of the voting.

We shall now begin the voting process. Members are requested to remain seated until all ballots have been collected.

Ballot papers will now be distributed. May I request representatives to write on the ballot paper the name of the one State for which they wish to vote. Ballot papers containing more than one name will be declared invalid. If a ballot paper contains the name of a Member State that does not belong to the relevant region, that ballot paper will be declared invalid. Ballot papers bearing the name of an individual shall not be counted.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Subotic (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Mr. Díaz Reina (Colombia), Mr. Aliu (Ghana), Mr. Zamporlini (Italy), Mr. Fawundu (Sierra Leone) and Mrs. Thanarat (Thailand) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

Mrs. Baaro (Kiribati), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was suspended at 11.30 a.m. and resumed at noon.

The Acting President: The result of the voting is as follows:

Number of ballot papers:	184
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	184
Abstentions:	0
Number of members present and voting:	184
Required majority:	93
Number of votes obtained by each Member State:	
Morocco	131
Ethiopia	53

Having obtained the greatest number of votes and not less than a majority of the votes of those present and voting, Morocco has been selected to propose a candidate for appointment to the Joint Inspection Unit.

I thank members for their advice and I thank the tellers for their assistance.

In accordance with article 3, paragraph 1, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, Canada, Germany, Morocco and Romania will be requested to submit the names of candidates and their curricula vitae highlighting the candidates' relevant qualifications for the tasks ahead.

I would like to remind members that, in accordance with resolution 59/267, of 23 December 2004, the candidate should have experience in at least one of the following fields: oversight, audit, inspection, investigation, evaluation, finance, project evaluation, programme evaluation, human resources management, management, public administration, monitoring and/or programme performance, as well as knowledge of the United Nations system and its role in international relations.

After holding the appropriate consultations described in article 3, paragraph 2, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, including consultations with the President of the Economic and Social Council and with the Secretary-General in his capacity as Chairman of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, the President of the General Assembly will submit the names of the candidates to the Assembly for appointment to the Joint Inspection Unit.

We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of sub-item (g) of agenda item 113.

The President: A representative has requested to make a statement in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that statements made in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Dibaei (Islamic Republic of Iran): I take the floor in exercise of our right of reply.

It is regrettable that, once again today, the representative of the Israeli regime has levelled baseless accusations against my country. I just wanted to re-emphasize our position that the occupation by Israel is the main source of all the problems in the region, including violent extremism. His remarks were off the topic of the resolution adopted today (resolution 69/267), on the anniversary of the end of the Second World War. Iran was one of the victims of that war.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.

United Nations A/69/PV.81

General Assembly
Sixty-ninth session

Official Records

81st plenary meeting
Thursday, 5 March 2015, noon
New York

President: Mr. Kutesa .... (Uganda)

The meeting was called to order at noon.

Agenda item 136 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/69/722/Add.5)

The President: Before proceeding to the items on our agenda, I should like, in keeping with established practice, to draw the attention of the General Assembly to document A/69/722/Add.5, in which the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of the information contained in document A/69/722/Add.4, the Marshall Islands has made the payment necessary to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in the Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in that document?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 13 (*continued*)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Draft resolution (A/69/L.54)

The President: Members will recall that the Assembly held a debate on agenda item 13 and its sub-item (a), jointly with agenda item 115, at its 51st plenary meeting, on 14 November 2014.

I now give the floor to the representative of Mongolia to introduce draft resolution A/69/L.54.

Mr. Och (Mongolia): I have the honour to introduce today the draft resolution entitled "Education for democracy" (A/69/L.54) on behalf of a large number of sponsors representing various regions.

This new draft resolution reaffirms the fundamental link between democratic governance, peace, development and the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. The text also takes note of the Global Education First initiative, launched by the Secretary-General in 2012, in particular its third priority area — namely, fostering global citizenship — and encourages human rights education programmes throughout the world. The draft resolution would reinforce global, regional and national efforts on educating people in the culture of peace, democracy, tolerance and respect for different civilizations and religions and in upholding the values of freedom and human rights.

Since late January, we have organized several rounds of informal consultations, made an effort to accommodate the interests of Member States and reached consensus on the draft text. In the new text, we stress the complementarity of human rights education, training and learning and education for democracy. We recall the relevant commitments from the United Nations Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2), while acknowledging the role of international, regional and all intergovernmental organizations in the support of democracy. Member States are encouraged to integrate

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education for democracy along with civic education and human rights education into their educational standards and to develop and strengthen programmes and curricular and extracurricular educational activities aimed at the promotion and consolidation of democratic values, democratic governance and human rights. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, a specialized agency with the relevant expertise and mandate, is requested to cooperate with the Secretary-General on the implementation of and reporting on this draft resolution.

I wish to take this opportunity to extend our gratitude to all delegations that took an active part in our discussions on the draft text, and to all the sponsors for their invaluable support.

In conclusion, on behalf of all the sponsors, may I express our hope that the draft resolution will, as in previous years, receive the unanimous support of Member States and wide sponsorship.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/69/L.54, entitled "Education for democracy".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Zhang Saijin: I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution and in addition to those delegations listed in document A/69/L.54, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: Andorra, Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Morocco, Panama, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the United States of America.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/69/L.54?

Draft resolution A/69/L.54 was adopted (resolution 69/268).

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America.

Ms. Derderian (United States of America): The United States wishes to thank the Mongolian delegation in its capacity as facilitator and sponsor of the resolution just adopted (resolution 69/268).

We wish to recognize the vital work that the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) is doing to support democracy and human rights around the world. UNDEF is uniquely positioned to promote capacity-building, and its work is especially important now, with so many areas of the world in transition. All of us can increase the reach of good governance by doing as much as we can to support UNDEF, which relies solely on voluntary contributions for its critical activities.

Transparency and good governance are not just good politics; countries with open Governments, open economies and open societies increasingly flourish. They become more prosperous, healthier, more secure and more peaceful. This resolution reaffirms that democracy is a universal value based on the freely expressed desire of individuals to fully participate in all aspects of political and social life in their societies. We recognize the importance to democracy of the right to equal access to education as reflected in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We also understand the resolution's reaffirmation of prior documents to apply to those who affirmed them initially.

We support today's resolution despite our disappointment that it continues to single out the right to development. The concerns of the United States about the existence of a right to development are long-standing and well known. The right to development does not have an agreed international meaning. Furthermore, work is needed to make it consistent with human rights, which the international community recognizes as universal rights held and enjoyed by individuals and which every individual may demand from his or her own Government.

The United States stands firm in its commitment to the promotion of democracy and views this resolution's goal of promoting education for democracy as an important step in the consolidation of democratic values, while at the same time recognizing that education standards and curriculums in the United States are determined at the state and local levels.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 13.

Agenda item 7 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

The President: Members will recall that, at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 19 September 2014, the General Assembly decided to allocate sub-item (c) of agenda item 19 to the Second Committee. In order to enable the General Assembly to take action expeditiously on the draft resolution before it, may I take it that the Assembly wishes to consider sub-item (c) of agenda item 19 directly in plenary meeting and proceed immediately to its consideration?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 19 (*continued*)

Sustainable development

(c) International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

Draft decision (A/69/L.56)

The President: The General Assembly will now proceed to consider the draft decision entitled "Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction".

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft decision A/69/L.56?

The draft decision was adopted (decision 69/556).

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (c) of agenda item 19.

Agenda items 13 and 115 (*continued*)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

(a) Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Draft decision (A/69/L.57)

The President: Members will recall that the General Assembly held a debate on agenda item 13 and its sub-item (a) jointly with agenda item 115 at its 51st plenary meeting, on 14 November 2014. Members will also recall that, under sub-item (a) of agenda item 13 and agenda item 115, the Assembly adopted resolution 69/108 at its 65th plenary meeting, on 8 December 2014. Members will furthermore recall that, under the same agenda items, the General Assembly adopted resolution 69/244 and decision 69/550 at its 77th plenary meeting, on 29 December 2014, as well as decision 69/555, at its 78th plenary meeting, on 16 January 2015.

The Assembly will now take action on draft decision A/69/L.57, entitled "Opening of the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda".

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft decision A/69/L.57?

The draft decision was adopted (decision 69/557).

The President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda items 13 and agenda 115.

Agenda item 113 (*continued*)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(b) Appointment of members of the Committee on Contributions

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/69/565/Add.2)

The President: In paragraph 3 of its report, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint Ms. Seongmee Yoon of the Republic of Korea as a member of the Committee on Contributions for a term of office beginning on 5 March 2015 and ending on 31 December 2017.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint Ms. Seongmee Yoon as a member of the Committee on Contributions for a term of office beginning on 5 March 2015 and ending on 31 December 2017?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 113.

Agenda item 112 (*continued*)

Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections

(b) Election of five members of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission

The President: Members will recall that, in accordance with paragraphs 4 (a) to (e) of resolution 60/180, of 20 December 2005, the Organizational Committee shall comprise seven members of the Security Council, including the five permanent members; seven members of the Economic and Social Council, elected from regional groups; five top providers of assessed contributions to United Nations budgets and of voluntary contributions to United Nations funds, programmes and agencies, including a standing peacebuilding fund; five top providers of military personnel and civilian police to United Nations missions; and seven additional members elected by the General Assembly, giving due consideration to representation from all regional groups in the overall composition of the Committee.

Members will also recall that, at the 62nd and 65th plenary meetings of its sixty-seventh session, the Assembly elected Brazil, Kenya, Malaysia, Peru and South Africa as members of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission for a two-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2013; and that, at the 69th plenary meeting of the sixty-eighth session, the Assembly elected Bosnia and Herzegovina and Guatemala as members of the Organizational Committee for a two-year period, beginning on 1 January 2014.

Members will furthermore recall that, by resolution 63/145, of 18 December 2008, the General Assembly decided at its sixty-third session that the term of office for members of the General Assembly on the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission would begin on 1 January instead of 23 June.

By a letter dated 5 December 2014 (A/69/634) addressed to the President of the General Assembly, I was informed by the facilitator of the group of leading financial contributors of the decision that the financial contributors Canada, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands and Sweden would serve a full two-year term from 2015 to 2016. Also, by a letter dated 11 November 2014 (A/69/577) addressed to the President of the General Assembly, I was informed by the facilitator of the troop-contributing countries of their decision that Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India, Nigeria and Pakistan will serve from the troop-contributing countries category of membership for a term of office beginning on 1 January 2015 and ending on 31 December 2016.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to take note of documents A/69/634 and A/69/577?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Assembly will now proceed to the election of five members of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission.

By resolution 60/261, of 8 May 2006, the Assembly decided that the members of the Organizational Committee shall serve for renewable terms of two years, as applicable. Accordingly, Brazil, Kenya, Malaysia, Peru and South Africa are eligible for immediate re-election.

Regarding candidatures for the five seats, I should like to inform members that for the African States, the Group has endorsed Egypt, Kenya and Morocco; for the Asia-Pacific States, the Group has endorsed Malaysia; and for the Latin American and Caribbean States, the Group has endorsed Colombia.

Members will recall that, in resolution 60/261, the General Assembly decided that the rules of procedure and established practice of the Assembly for the election of members of its subsidiary bodies shall apply to its election of members of the Committee. For this election, rules 92 and 94 shall be applicable. Accordingly, the election shall be held by secret ballot and there shall be no nominations.

However, I should also like to recall paragraph 16 of decision 34/401, whereby the practice of dispensing with the secret ballot for elections to subsidiary organs when the number of candidates corresponds to or is less than the number of seats to be filled should become standard, unless a delegation specifically requests a vote on a given election. In the absence of such a request, may I take it that the Assembly decides to proceed to the election on that basis?

It was so decided.

The President: Since the number of candidates endorsed by the Group of African States, the Group of Asia-Pacific States and the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States is equal to or less than the number of seats to be filled, may I take it that the General Assembly decides to elect Colombia, Egypt, Kenya, Malaysia and Morocco as members of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission for a two-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2015?

It was so decided.

The President: I congratulate Colombia, Egypt, Kenya, Malaysia and Morocco on their election as members of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 112?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.

United Nations A/69/PV.82

General Assembly

Sixty-ninth session

Official Records

82nd plenary meeting
Friday, 20 March 2015, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kutesa .... (Uganda)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Mahmadaminov (Tajikistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 7 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

The Acting President: I invite the attention of the General Assembly to resolution 69/162, of 18 December 2014, which calls for a special meeting in commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Members will recall that at its 73rd plenary meeting, on 18 December 2014, the General Assembly concluded its consideration of agenda item 66. It will be necessary to reopen the consideration of that item in order to hold this special meeting. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to reopen its consideration of agenda item 66?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 66 (*continued*)

Elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

Commemorative meeting on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

The Acting President: I am pleased to join members today to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and to deliver this statement on behalf of the President of the General Assembly.

> "The theme of this year's commemoration, 'Learning from historical tragedies to combat racial discrimination today', not only draws our attention to the tragedies of the past, but also calls upon each of us to act decisively to combat all forms of racism and racial discrimination.
>
> "As members may recall, this international day of action against racism was established in remembrance of the 69 unarmed and peaceful South African protestors killed in Sharpeville, South Africa, on 21 March 1960. That tragedy was just one of the many racially influenced events in South Africa at the time. That horror resonated in many parts of the world and pushed people, nations and organizations to act to end the racist apartheid regime. In its resolution 2142 (XXI), the General Assembly proclaimed 21 March as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Through this annual commemoration, the international community joins together and vows to preserve the historical memory of past tragedies, as well as draw lessons from them to protect humankind and prevent their reoccurrence.
>
> "This year also marks the launch of the International Decade for People of African Descent. Through today's event and many others that will take place in the context of the International Decade, we will acknowledge the profound and lasting impacts of historical human rights tragedies, including,

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slavery, the slave trade and the transatlantic slave trade. We should draw important lessons from those past tragedies so that we may use that knowledge to address contemporary manifestations of racism and racial discrimination.

"In my opening statement at the twenty-eighth regular session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, I deplored recent violent attacks on innocent people around the world motivated by discrimination based on race, ethnicity or religion. Today I reiterate that message in saying that such prejudice must not be allowed to take root in our societies. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. We must therefore continue to reject and prevent discrimination in all forms, including, xenophobia, stereotyping, hatred, marginalization and other related intolerance. We must prevent the manifestation of such acts, which have the potential to compromise peace, stability and development around the world.

"On 21 and 22 April, I will convene in conjunction with the Secretary-General and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, a high-level thematic debate on promoting tolerance and reconciliation. The debate will provide an opportunity to share experiences and develop strategies with regard to how we can foster peaceful, inclusive societies and counter violent extremism. It is my hope that this debate will add further credence to our efforts to combat racial discrimination. Indeed, countering racial discrimination and promoting tolerance and reconciliation are mutually reinforcing. Together we must use this debate and all other available platforms to condemn unequivocally all manifestations of racism, prejudice and intolerance."

I now give the floor to the Chef de Cabinet, Ms. Susana Malcorra, to make a statement on behalf of the Secretary-General.

Ms. Malcorra: I thank the President of the General Assembly for organizing this solemn and important event. It is my honour to represent the Secretary-General, who unfortunately cannot be with us today.

Every day people of all ages endure hatred, injustice and humiliation because of their skin colour, descent, national or ethnic origin or other supposedly racial characteristics. Such discrimination has underpinned oppression, poverty, slavery, genocide and war.

The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is an opportunity to renew our commitment to building a world of justice and equality where xenophobia and bigotry do not exist. We must learn the lessons of history and acknowledge the profound damage caused by racial discrimination. That means carefully preserving the memory of historical wrongs so that we may use our knowledge to eradicate prejudice and teach tolerance, non-discrimination and respect for diversity everywhere and for all.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the launch of the International Decade for People of African Descent. In the past 50 years, there has been progress in the fight against racism and racial discrimination. We have seen the end of colonialism, the dismantling of apartheid and the rise of the global equality movement. Yet as history and current events attest, racial discrimination still presents a clear danger to people and communities in all regions. Lasting peace can be built only on the premise that people have equal rights and dignity regardless of ethnicity, gender, religion and social or other status. To that end, I urge all nations to ratify the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, to promote historical accuracy and to put in place robust policies and laws that will end all forms of discrimination as enshrined in the Convention.

It is important that we keep the spotlight on the foregoing issues and educate the young so that we may never forget the dangers inherent in racism. In January, we commemorated the victims of the Holocaust. Next week, we will unveil the memorial built to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. On 7 April, we will commemorate the Rwandan genocide. All these terrible episodes in human history had their roots in racism. That is why we must learn from past tragedies to combat racism today. That is why today's event is so important.

The Acting President: I thank the Chef de Cabinet for her statement.

In accordance with resolution 69/162, of 18 December 2014, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was invited to speak at this commemorative meeting. The High Commissioner is unable to be here with us today due to his participation at a similar meeting in the framework of the Human Rights Council in Geneva. His message will be made available on the website of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

I would now like to consult members with a view to inviting Ms. Verene Shepherd, member of the Human Rights Council Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, to make a statement at this meeting in accordance with resolution 69/162.

If there is no objection, I shall take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly, without setting a precedent, to invite Ms. Shepherd to make a statement at this meeting?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: In accordance with the decision just taken, I now give the floor to Ms. Shepherd.

Ms. Shepherd: It is a real privilege for me to address the General Assembly as we approach another International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, as proclaimed by the General Assembly in 1966 six years after the tragedy in South Africa that inspired its proclamation. I thank the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session, Mr. Sam Kutesa, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and my colleague members of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent for this signal honour. I applaud all who are assembled here this morning for showing, by their presence, that they share a common concern for the creation of a world in which racism, racial discrimination, Afrophobia, xenophobia and related intolerance play no part, either in our personal lives or in our international relations.

Like me, they believe in the fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined in the group of international instruments adopted after the Second World War as a response to the atrocities of the war, to protect the human rights and inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of the human family. Within that context, racial discrimination is to be treated as abhorrent. I therefore acknowledge the appropriateness of the theme chosen for this year's commemoration: "Learning from historical tragedies to combat racial discrimination today". The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, whose fiftieth anniversary is marked this year, is very explicit about what constitutes racial discrimination. It is defined as

> "any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life" (*International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, article 1, para. 1*)

Many of us here are familiar with the major historical tragedies and inhumane actions that have affected global history and that were related to racial or ethnic hierarchizing and discrimination, including conquest, colonization, genocide against indigenous and minority populations, the African Maafa — the transatlantic slave trade and enslavement — wars to suppress enslaved-led protests and anti-colonial uprisings, the Jewish Holocaust, racial apartheid, the brutal suppression of civil rights and labour movements — and the list goes on. There was untold suffering as a result of those tragedies and inhumane acts, including murder, torture, public flogging, imprisonment and general humiliation. The descendants of those whose ancestors suffered — for example, from the African Maafa and the Jewish Holocaust — have tried to find ways to memorialize their ancestors and seek redress for such tragedies, including through reparations.

I stand before the General Assembly as a product of some of those historical tragedies, the most tragic of which were the forced relocation of my ancestors from Africa and parts of Asia to a life of enslavement and contract labour in the Caribbean and the post-slavery and post-indentureship regime of racial apartheid and neo-colonialism, which so scarred Caribbean societies. But I also stand before the Assembly as a living example of what the battle against such historical tragedies can produce: a scholar-activist and human rights defender with no hate in her heart who can work in local, regional and international spaces with other committed advocates to try to banish the legacies of those tragedies from our landscape.

I do harbour some degree of anxiety, however — anxiety because almost 50 years after the proclamation of this International Day, too many individuals, communities and societies continue to suffer from the injustices and stigma that racism brings. And those who suffer most from racism and racial discrimination are Africans and people of African descent. However, the programme of activities for the implementation of the International

Decade for People of African Descent, launched right here in 2014 on Human Rights Day, under the theme "Recognition, justice, development" (see A/69/PV.55), offers us diverse strategies for righting the wrongs of the past so that we can build a more peaceful world.

Yes, we continue to be confronted with evidence that we are still some way from realizing the goal of universal peace, inter-ethnic harmony and unbiased justice that so many have worked to achieve, and indeed shed their blood to attain. We see the evidence today in the hands in the air because the "black lives matter/all lives matter" campaign has transformed itself from a local American movement to a global movement; in the racial taunts directed at black players at football games where, on occasion, "macaco" — or monkey — is shouted from the stands with complete disregard for the feelings of the affected players; in institutional and structural racism; in racial profiling at international borders and within some countries; in messages and ideas based on racism, racial superiority or hatred that incite racism; and in differential access to quality education, employment and justice. We see it in biased textual and visual representations, cartoons and journalistic pieces that disrespect others' religion and ethnicity; in everyday speech and attitudes that reflect xenophobia and bigotry; in cultural practices that humiliate particular ethnic groups; in the iconic symbols placed in some spaces that remind formerly oppressed populations of the perpetrators of the tragedies of the past; and in so many other areas.

I therefore join with the international community today in the global call for concrete action for the total elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, Afrophobia and other intolerance, and for the comprehensive implementation of, and follow up to, the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

The year 2015 is a timely reminder to all of us of our responsibilities to those who are the victims of racism and racial discrimination, as there is a coincidence of anniversaries that remind us of the tragedies of the past. It is the fifty-first anniversary of the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act in the United States of America. It is the fiftieth anniversary of Bloody Sunday — 7 March 1965 — when police beat voting-rights activists as they attempted to march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, United States of America, to insist on voting rights. It is the 150th anniversary of the 1865 Morant Bay massacre in Jamaica, where over 400 Jamaicans were murdered by colonial forces. It is the 200th anniversary of Simón Bolívar's "carta de Jamaica", in which he explained his mission to liberate Latin America from colonial oppression. It is the 211th anniversary of Haitian independence, which was won by enslaved and free black people in a country that made the colonial oppressor rich but impoverished an entire nation.

However, there is hope amid all those painful memories. As we reflect on 21 March 1960, when police opened fire and killed 69 men, women and children at a peaceful demonstration against the apartheid pass laws in Sharpeville, South Africa, let us celebrate the fact that, since that tragic day, the apartheid system in South Africa has been dismantled, and South Africa has made great efforts to ensure that never again will a system as evil as racial apartheid raise its ugly head in their country.

The global community has also made strides in terms of the elimination of racism and racial discrimination. Colonialism has ended in many more countries since 1960, and the superstructure of slavery and racial apartheid has been dismantled. Racist laws and practices have been abolished in many countries, and the United Nations has built an international framework for fighting racism, guided by the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other rights-based instruments.

Let us commit ourselves today to the fight against the repetition of historical tragedies. The United States of America has its Edmund Pettus Bridge, the scene of the Bloody Sunday clashes, but we can build our own metaphorical or symbolic bridges, bridges of understanding, and extend such bridges across the human family, from Alaska to Argentina, from the Norwegian Sea to the Mediterranean Sea, from Scotland to Siberia, from Algiers to Cape Town, from Jordan to Japan and from Russia to New Zealand, joining hands across the world for the good of us all and in memory of the victims of historical tragedies and the revolutionary struggles against various injustices. We therefore today remember some of the victims of the Sharpeville massacre, including Wiggi Bakela, James Beshe, Ephraim Chaka, Gilbert Demo, Elliot Sekoala Kabi, Miriam Lekitla and Paulina Mafulatse.

The Americas, the region in which the greatest crime against humanity was committed and where every day we struggle to eliminate the remnants of historical tragedies and racial discrimination, also had victims of revolutionary struggles to end slavery and racial apartheid. We must sing the praises of those men and women, whose revolutionary ideology and programme were clearly anchored in their experiences and in their sense of what had become what the late Professor Rex Nettleford often called a derided and emasculated ancestral culture.

May Nelson Mandela's impassioned words forever ring in our ears: "never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another". May we in the General Assembly modify those words and make our own commitment and pledge: never, never and never again will our beautiful world continue to be scarred by racial hatred and intolerance of diversity and descend into chaos because of obduracy and intolerance.

However, there can be no peace without justice. Robert Nesta — or, as some members know him, "Bob" — Marley, that revolutionary icon, using the philosophy of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I, long cautioned that until the philosophy that holds one race superior and another inferior is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned, everywhere is war. Until there are no longer first- and second-class citizens of any nation; until the colour of a person's skin is of no more significance than the colour of his or her eyes; and until basic human rights are equally guaranteed to all, without regard to race, it will be war. Until that day, the dream of lasting peace, world citizenship and the rule of international morality will remain but a fleeting illusion to be pursued, but never attained.

To avoid any such consequence, let us today do what we did in the past to end slavery, apartheid, colonial rule, discriminatory laws and practices and various unjust wars. Let us do what we did in a collaborative spirit: form a united front that includes all nations, all ethnic groups, all religious groups, all genders, all classes and all castes to end racism, racial discrimination, Afrophobia, xenophobia and related intolerance, and let us do it now, in a spirit of mutual respect and tolerance, and by so doing demonstrate our commitment to the foundational principle of the inherent dignity of the human person.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Slovenia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Marn (Slovenia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

The Group of Eastern European States welcomes today's meeting of the General Assembly devoted to the commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which is being held this year under the theme "Learning from historical tragedies to combat racial discrimination today".

Combating racism lies at the heart of the United Nations. Human beings are born free and equal in dignity and in rights. All members of our societies, without distinction of any kind, must be treated equally. Nevertheless, racism continues to cause suffering for millions of people around the world. As the most recent report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to resolution 68/151 shows (A/69/354), despite some progress made in combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, those forms of discrimination have not been eradicated, and no country can claim to be free from them. We all have to do more, and in this fight we have to be united.

The aim of this year's International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is to explore the root causes of racial discrimination and to learn the lessons history has provided. By remembering tragic events such as the Sharpeville massacre and reminding ourselves of past tragedies, we have to ensure that such abuse of human rights can never be repeated. Education and awareness-raising are important tools in combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, but we should also do more in promoting intercultural dialogue, tolerance and respect for diversity.

In a few months we will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The Convention is and should remain the basis of all efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate racism. In that respect, we would like to reiterate the fundamental importance of ratifying and fully implementing the Convention, which should be a priority for all countries, and to express our wish for its early universal ratification. At the same time, we would like to underline that the fight against racism is a primary responsibility of the State and that policy, legislative and other effective measures should be taken by each country at the national level in order to achieve progress in our common endeavours.

The Eastern European States are deeply concerned that the objective of eradicating racism has not yet been attained and that, despite many efforts, much still needs to be done at the national, regional and international levels. We remain committed to continuing the fight against racism and racial discrimination, which remains a priority in our human rights agendas. We also support the work of civil society organizations in this area and their activities aimed at raising public awareness on the importance of fighting this phenomenon.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance is an issue that concerns all countries. The efforts of the international community for the total elimination of this scourge can be successful only if we all work together to achieve this shared objective.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Jamaica, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Rattray (Jamaica): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

The Latin American and the Caribbean States reaffirm our steadfast commitment to eliminating the scourge of racial discrimination in keeping with the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. Racism has no place in our world, and its negative consequences, as manifested in the discrimination and dehumanization faced by too many of the world's citizens, must be addressed with greater urgency and effectiveness.

The theme selected for this year's commemoration — "Learning from historical tragedies to combat racial discrimination today" — is most fitting. Taking a look at the historical tragedies that have racial discrimination as their root cause, among them slavery, the Holocaust, apartheid, genocide and segregation, provides the impetus for us to ensure that horrors such as those never recur. We have made significant efforts in the past to do so, among them the passage of the landmark International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. However, we must move beyond rhetoric to achieve tangible progress in defeating the monster of racial discrimination, as many challenges remain in the social, economic and political spheres.

The International Decade for People of African Descent 2015-2024, with its extensive programme of activities adopted during this very session (see A/69/PV.55), seeks to address many of the lingering legacies of one of the greatest forms of racial discrimination the world has ever seen and continues to grapple with. This International Decade will complement the Latin American and Caribbean Decade of People of African Descent, which began in January 2014, as proclaimed by the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in September 2013. On that occasion, CELAC also decided to advocate in favour of the adoption of the International Decade for People of African Descent. Both decades provide the framework for taking concrete measures to address the wide-ranging effects of racism on people of African descent today.

Recently, in the CELAC action plan for 2015 adopted at the third CELAC Summit, held in Belén, Costa Rica, on 29 January, our Community decided to implement the Latin American and Caribbean People of African Descent Action Plan, which resulted from the CELAC working group meeting on people of African descent held in Brasilia on 4 and 5 September 2014. CELAC also decided to develop a regional agenda that promotes social inclusion policies for populations of African descent.

The Member States in our region comprise multi-ethnic, multicultural and multilingual populations. Our societies stand to benefit from the richness of the diversity of our peoples. We recognize that encouraging the full participation and contribution of all our peoples is a significant route towards fulfilling our own development goals. In that respect, countries of our region firmly believe that sustainable development cannot be achieved except where it is achieved for all people, regardless of racial distinction.

In this pivotal year of 2015, the Latin American and Caribbean States reaffirm their determination to promote the full inclusion of all persons in our societies, regardless of their race or ethnic background, and to achieve a region and world free of racial discrimination.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and Other States.

Ms. Frankinet (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and Other States in this commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

The General Assembly proclaimed this day in remembrance of the massacre that took place 55 years ago in Sharpeville, South Africa, where 69 people were killed and many others injured during a peaceful protest against apartheid. This month we also commemorate another important historic event: the fiftieth anniversary of Bloody Sunday in Selma, Alabama. It was there, on 7 March 1965, on the Edmund Pettus Bridge, that state police officers violently attacked a peaceful civil rights march.

Today we come together to express our solidarity with present and past victims of racism and racial discrimination. We pay tribute to exceptional leaders who paved the way, such as Nelson Mandela, who courageously led the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, and Martin Luther King, Junior, who led thousands of peaceful demonstrators from Selma to Montgomery in the historic voting rights march. We also pay tribute to the ordinary people who made extraordinary contributions and helped to sustain those movements against racial discrimination. Those collective efforts have been crucial in the global fight against racism and in the development of both international and national frameworks aimed at the elimination of racial discrimination.

This year also marks the fiftieth anniversary of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. In 1965, it was the first basic international human rights treaty; today, with 177 States parties, the Convention has been ratified by virtually all States. The independent experts of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination play an essential role in monitoring the implementation of the Convention and in helping States in adopting policies aimed at combating racism and racial discrimination.

Over the past 50 years progress has been made in the fight against racial discrimination. Yet we must acknowledge that racism and racial discrimination are still embedded in all societies and that, in some instances, tensions run high and require us to take urgent action. History has proved time and again that racism and racial discrimination threaten the very foundations of our societies and leave a damaging impact for generations. We must learn from past tragedies and redouble our efforts to combat racism today. We need to ensure the effective implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and honour our commitments.

On the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, let us embrace tolerance and join together to put an end to racial discrimination wherever it occurs. Let us reaffirm the fundamental principle enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in this commemorative meeting.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 66?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.

United Nations A/69/PV.83

General Assembly
Sixty-ninth session

Official Records

83rd plenary meeting
Wednesday, 25 March 2015, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kutesa . . . . (Uganda)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 116 (*continued*)

Follow-up to the commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade

Commemorative meeting of the General Assembly on the occasion of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

The President: Members will recall that the General Assembly held the debate on this agenda item and adopted resolution 69/19, entitled "Permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade", at its 58th plenary meeting, on 21 November 2014.

Today, as we commemorate the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, we focus on women and slavery and the hardships borne by enslaved women. We also pay tribute to those women and others who fought for the abolition of slavery and succeeded in passing on the rich heritage of their ancestral African cultures.

For black men and women alike, slavery was a devastating experience. They were torn from their birthplace, families and communities, forced to perform gruelling labour, subjected to mental and physical degradation and denied their most basic human rights. Enslaved men and women were brutalized, arbitrarily separated from loved ones and treated as chattel property.

History tells us that despite those common factors, the circumstances of slavery were different for black women and black men. The plight of female slaves was highlighted by Deborah Gray White, who wrote in her landmark work, *Ar'n't I a Woman?*, that a slave woman was black in a white society, a slave in a free society and a woman in a society ruled by men. Enslaved women worked in the fields alongside the men, did household chores and were mothers to their own children as well as surrogates to the children of the masters. They also suffered the indignity of sexual exploitation at the hands of overseers and plantation owners.

When it came to resistance, enslaved women also played an important role. As often as they could, black women, just like black men, rebelled against the inhumanities of slave owners. Enslaved women learned to rely heavily on each other and today, the descendants of those brave women are the bedrock of the culture of the African diaspora and continue to hold together their homes, extended families and communities.

Despite the oppression of slavery, enslaved women brought with them the creativity and ingenuity of their ancestors. We can take pride in the fact that many African traditions survived the horrors of the Middle Passage. Many here in the Hall joined us outside earlier for the unveiling of the Permanent Memorial to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. The significance of Rodney Leon's *Ark of Return* is that it ensures that we will never forget the injustices of slavery. At the same time it inspires hope.

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While we reflect on the past and the progress made, including the abolition of slavery and the slave trade, we must also acknowledge that slavery continues in many forms and manifestations. It is deplorable that even today, many innocent women and young girls are still held in bondage and are denied their freedoms and rights to dignified lives, due to human trafficking and sexual exploitation. In addition, many children continue to be held in servitude as child labourers. We must intensify our collective efforts in combating and eliminating such abuses.

Our commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards should be translated into respect for all of humanity.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: It is an honour to be with all present here to commemorate the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. In thanking the President of the General Assembly, I also welcome Ms. Sylviane Diouf. I commend her for her tireless work in bringing home the true horrors and suffering brought about by that diabolical trade, through her award-winning books, publications and documentaries.

This Day allows us to remember 15 million men, women and children who were heartlessly torn from their homeland on the African continent and forced to cross the Atlantic in slave ships and who then suffered or died under an inconceivably brutal system of slavery in the Americas.

The theme for this year's commemoration is "Women and slavery". It allows us to pay special tribute to the millions of women who endured the harsh conditions of slavery, as well as additional sexual exploitation because of their gender. This year is particularly meaningful as we honour the victims of slavery with a permanent memorial, entitled *Ark of Return* — beautifully designed by Mr. Rodney Leon — which we have just unveiled on the visitor's plaza outside this Hall. It will stand as an enduring acknowledgement to the people of African descent who perished or suffered as slaves. It also honours the huge numbers of people purchased by the slave traders who never even survived the passage across the Atlantic. *The Ark of Return* will serve as an educational tool for teaching future generations about the transatlantic slave trade through the United Nations "Remember slavery" programme.

Around the world, United Nations information centres are marking this day with educational activities to help raise awareness about the dangers posed by racism and prejudice. Raising awareness of those issues is just the first step. We encourage Member States to introduce lessons into school curricula on the causes, consequences and lessons of the transatlantic slave trade. The United Nations Department of Public Information and UNESCO, through its Slave Route Project, are ready to assist Member States to achieve that end.

Tragically, contemporary forms of slavery persist in the form of forced labour, trafficking, sexual exploitation or captivity in slavery-like conditions. I call on all Member States to act without fear or favour against all modern manifestations of slavery whenever and wherever they occur.

Finally, I would like to commend the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for continuing to take the lead in helping to ensure that the rights of all people of African descent are protected and fulfilled. This was called for by the General Assembly, which proclaimed 2015 to 2024 as the International Decade for People of African Descent. The commitment to this International Decade and the unveiling of the Permanent Memorial are tangible signs of the international community's commitment to work towards eliminating racism. They are also a sign of our commitment to ensure that the twenty-first century affords people everywhere the right to live in peace, freedom and dignity.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

Before proceeding further, I should like to consult members on inviting Ms. Sylviane Diouf, Curator of Digital Collections at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture of the New York Public Library, to make a keynote statement.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly, without setting a precedent, to invite Ms. Sylviane Diouf to make a keynote statement at this commemorative meeting?

It was so decided.

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Diouf.

Ms. Diouf (New York Public Library): It is a great honour to be here today as we commemorate the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, whose memory has been so movingly captured and rendered by architect Rodney Leon.

This year's theme, "Women and slavery", comes fittingly on the heels of International Women's Day and Women's History Month. This theme reminds us that no history, no present and no future can be written without recognizing the vital role of women, which unfortunately is too often obscured, glossed over, forgotten or even denied. So I am particularly pleased to be helping to break the silence that surrounds the women who were not simply the victims of the transatlantic slave trade and slavery but were also immense contributors to the creation of a new world.

But first let us remember that, between the early 1500s and 1867, as many captives crossed the Atlantic Ocean as were forced out of Africa by all the other slave trades combined from the years 500 to 1900. The transatlantic slave trade was the most massive forced migration in history. As a result, from 1492 to 1820, 80 per cent of the people who arrived in the Americas were Africans. Only 20 per cent were Europeans. Africans landed in every country, from Argentina to Bolivia, from every Caribbean island to Honduras and North America. The Africans' skills, knowledge and work transformed the land. They mined and cultivated the riches of the continent. They built cities and towns and fought for the freedom and independence of the countries that enslaved them, all the while developing new cultures, new languages, new religions, new peoples.

Females represented 30 per cent of the people who survived the Middle Passage. We know that most deported Africans were between the ages of 15 and 30. What that means is that the majority of the women who boarded the slave ships were married and had children. That was the case for many men, too. Those women were not only daughters and sisters, then, but they were also wives and mothers who left husbands and young children behind or saw them embark on another ship. The sheer agony of being so brutally separated from the family that loved them, uprooted from their community forever, can never be adequately described, and was often expressed without words. On the slave ships, one surgeon explained,

> "Men and women showed signs of extreme distress and despair, from a feeling of being torn from their friends and connections. They were often heard in the night making a howling, melancholy noise expressive of extreme anguish. It was because they had dreamed that they were in their own country again, and finding themselves when awake in the hold of a slave ship. This exquisite sensibility was particularly observable among the women, many of whom, on such occasions, were found in hysteric fits".

The women who survived the ordeal represented 80 per cent of all the women who landed in the Americas before 1820. Their presence had a considerable impact on the formation of the continent. They were central to the demographic, social and cultural development of the Western hemisphere. They carried with them their knowledge of medicinal plans and various crops, their skills at gardening and midwifery, their cuisines, their songs, their dances, their stories and their gender traditions, values, cultures and religious practices. Although their mortality rates were high and their fertility rates were low, they were the women who brought to the world the first generations of Americans.

But as slaves and as women, they and their daughters and granddaughters bore the brunt of oppression. Studies have shown that women were more likely to be subjected to excessive physical abuse than men. They were more vulnerable and less likely to respond with force. As Frederick Douglass wrote, "He is whipped oftenest who is whipped easiest". Women, like men, were stripped naked, whipped and humiliated in front of their children and the larger community. But slavery's subjection took on an added dimension where women were concerned. They were victims of sexual abuse, from harassment to forced prostitution and from forced breeding to rape — rape by sailors on the slave ships and by overseers, slaveholders and their sons in the Americas was a persistent threat for all and a horrific reality for many. Used as it continues to be used today, as a weapon of terror, rape was meant to demean and assert power not only over the women but also their fathers, brothers, husbands and sons, who were reminded daily that they were considered to be less than men, since they could not protect their womenfolk.

Breeding under compulsion or for incentives was another appalling feature of the gender-based violence and exploitation that women had to endure. Overall, the sexual abuse of women was part of a larger attempt to demoralize and subdue the entire community. Slavery did not recognize the sanctity of marriage. Couples and families could be broken up at any time without warning. Except on large plantations, it was common for husbands and wives not to reside in the same place, and sometimes not even in the same area, following sales or the owners' relocation. It was thus a reality that despite men's often incredibly heroic efforts to visit and support their families, women were largely forced to raise their children on their own for as long as they could, since they lived under the constant threat of sale — the sale of their children or themselves.

But amid it all, women fought back in a multitude of ways. Their insolence was noted throughout the Americas. Verbal confrontations, gestures, attitudes, looks and facial expressions that showed a lack of respect and challenged authority were deemed to be mostly women's weapons. Such overt manifestations of hostility and insubordination could be brutally punished. It was often women who were the poisoners of animals and people, spreading terror among slaveholders, who feared for their lives and those of their families, and shrinking their holdings of humans and beasts. Rejecting the owners' management of their fertility, mothers and midwives were abortionists and perpetrators of infanticide who refused to bring children into a miserable world and increase slaveholders' fortunes.

Even if they did it less frequently than men, women ran away to cities and free territories, or stayed on their own or with their families in small and large Maroon communities throughout the western hemisphere. In the United States there were women and their children who lived in caves they had dug seven feet underground. Some gave birth there and remained safely hidden for years. During insurrections, women fed the fighters, transported ammunition, acted as spies and tended to the wounded. Some took up arms and fought, sometimes disguised as men. Others used their gender as a weapon. In the uprising and revolution in Saint-Domingue, for example, some women exchanged sexual favours with French soldiers for bullets and gunpowder.

Women were hanged, whipped to death, burned alive, mauled by dogs or shot for marronage, assault, arson, poisoning and rebellion. But one of the most enduring aspects of women's resistance was the preservation and passing on of culture. Because of the widespread dislocation of families, while mothers were not the only social and cultural nurturers of 15 generations of enslaved men and women in the Atlantic world, too often they were the main ones. Given the circumstances, they were the predominant providers to their children of the inner strength and coping mechanisms that enabled them to survive, live, love, hope, create and form strong, resourceful communities.

Through oral traditions, skills, deeds, example and sheer determination, women largely kept the African diaspora in the Atlantic world together. They were instrumental in creating and transmitting the dynamic and vibrant cultures we know as African-American, Gullah Geechee, Caribbean, Bushinengue, Afro-Peruviana, Afro-Brasileira, Creole and Antillaise. The women's bravery and stamina in a world that tried to degrade them as human beings, as Africans and as women is an extraordinarily inspiring example for all times and all places. In an evil system of terror, a racist, sexist and patriarchal environment, women found ways. They taught, protected, nurtured, challenged and fought.

The women's struggles alongside the men did not end with the abolition of the slave trade and slavery. As the need for an international decade for people of African descent abundantly shows, their 200 million descendants in the Americas still face daunting obstacles — individual and institutional racism, racial and gender marginalization and discrimination, poverty, de facto segregation and denial of basic rights. Breaking the silence and confronting those issues, including modern slavery and sexual slavery, that primarily victimize girls and women, are our responsibility today, so that the next generations will not have to fight the same battles. As a historian of the slave trade and slavery, I have learned about many things I wish I did not know or could forget. But one thing I know and will not forget is the remarkable creativity, energy, resourcefulness and fortitude of the women who, with amazing courage and grace, showed us the way.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Namibia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Emvula (Namibia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the African Group at this international gathering of women and men all working together to create ideas, strategies and commitments for empowering women across the world. The African Group aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The African Group is honoured to have participated in the unveiling of *The Ark of Return*, which will serve as a permanent memorial in honour of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. More than two centuries after slavery and the transatlantic slave trade were abolished, it is critical that we continue to take the time to remember the victims of that great blight on the history of mankind. Indeed, it is in keeping the memory of the victims alive that we may always remind present and future generations of the dangers of allowing one human being to completely subjugate another, without censure.

The memorial should also serve as a reminder of the level of barbarity to which mankind is capable of descending, if racist attitudes are left to fester and grow unchecked within a society. Such attitudes have played a large role in enabling societies and nations to tolerate the barbarity perpetrated against other human beings through slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. The ceremony took place as we had just launched the International Decade for People of African Descent, for the period 2015-2024, as well as the celebration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, whose theme invited us to learn from historical tragedies, how to combat racism today.

The African Group recognizes the tremendous contributions of Member States which, together with the foundations, have made the memorial a reality. The Permanent Memorial Committee established by the General Assembly through resolution 63/5 to oversee the permanent memorial project was drawn from all geographical regions, with Member States from the Caribbean Community and the African Union playing a primary role and has been the cornerstone of that laudable initiative.

We welcome the selection of this year's theme of the United Nations commemorative event, which is "Women and slavery". The theme is fitting as, additionally, 2015 marks the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Platform of Action and the African Union theme for 2015 is "Women's empowerment and development towards Africa's agenda 2063". The African women's decade declared by the African Union in 2010, now marks its fifth year. Indeed, all of those important milestones have aligned to illustrate the important role that women play in our societies.

We are proud to be here today to speak about women and slavery and ways in which historians are today acknowledging the vital roles women played in the slave communities. Understanding the role women played in the slave trade and the slave community is important in offering a new dynamic in the general study of slave culture. Often the history of slavery is studied from a male perspective, thereby failing to acknowledge the importance of women in all levels of slavery and belittling and devaluing their roles.

What seems to be forgotten is that, not only were slave women subordinate because of their race, but they also shared the trials of oppression directed at the female gender. Moreover, enslaved women played a key role in the development of slave communities through the development of family structures and economic productivity. Further to the dynamic role they played in their communities, the voices of slave women portrayed the sufferings they endured and exploitation and inhumane treatment at the hand of their masters, overseers and ship crews.

Through the tones of their voices and daring actions, slave women rose up in brave acts of liberty. Examples of such brave acts were the Maroon women in the Caribbean. They were rebellion leaders and priestesses who rallied the troops; soaring among them was the formidable Ashanti Nanny, in Jamaica. We were happy to be informed today that the Right Honourable Prime Minister seems to have descended from that generation. Nanny was never a slave, but a free woman who was painfully aware of the suffering and degradation her fellow slave sisters and country women endured. A spectacular and living example of a village that illustrates the struggle against the slave traders is the village of Ganvie, on Lake Nokoué in Benin.

In her book *Women in Caribbean History*, Verene Shepherd states that until the 1970s, Caribbean books neglected to mention women because early historians perceived colonization, government, religion, trade and warfare activities as very much male-dominated. There was also the belief that women's issues did not merit inclusion and where women could have been included, such as in slave uprisings, their contributions were ignored. Starting in the 1970s, the study of social history became more prominent and looked into topics such as family life.

In slave societies of the Caribbean in the late eighteenth century, domestic female slaves were more common on plantations where sugar production was the most rapid. Also, more often than not, slave assignments were based on the greatest profit to the slave owner.

In many cases, female slaves often preferred domestic labour to field labour, but as time wore on the trend was to move women into the fields to replace the declining total of young male slaves. That was due to female slaves living longer and the fact that they were versatile in both domestic and agricultural activities, which led to their image as somewhat animalistic due to their unparalleled female strength.

In addition, the enslaved women were sometimes able to produce their own food or craft work for the family and the market, and, as such, dominated that area. The market also became the place where the enslaved could gather and exchange news. It was thus obvious that if enslaved women dominated the markets they were also responsible for disseminating information, which allowed news to be passed among family members in different plantations and even helped in the planning of uprisings.

The market was also a vital place in the slave community, because there the rules for enslaved congregations were relaxed. In those places, slave women could almost freely be themselves and teach their children about their culture and customs, allowing their knowledge to be passed down to future generations and further developed. This knowledge was imparted to the children through their mothers' passive resistance, which was very common. They did this in their daily domestic tasks by "accidentally" burning their mistress's favourite dress while ironing, singing their songs as they worked, not allowing their children to forget where they came from and teaching them to be proud of who they were and their roots.

One example of how pride and self-awareness imparted through their mothers and allowed cultures and traditions to develop over time was the development of capoeira in Brazil. In the senzalas, or slave quarters on the plantations, the slaves strove to use their diverse African roots and power to break out of their chains. Even though slaves did not necessarily speak a common language, they shared their passionate struggle for freedom. They fought roughly, physically preparing themselves to flee and regain their humanity. All slaves came to the conclusion that, in order to escape, they needed to gather strength and unity.

The abolition of slavery and the slave trade marked a pivotal moment in history and in the lives of millions of slaves, the overwhelming majority of whom were people of African descent. However, it was only the first step towards ensuring justice and full equality for African descendants, wherever they may be. The abolition not only marked the end of an era, but also signified the start of a process that continues to this day and will end only with the total emancipation of people of African descent everywhere, and their equal enjoyment of all economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights.

The 1840 World Anti-Slavery Convention in London also became an inspiration for the women's rights movement. When women were not allowed to speak at the Convention, Anne Knight became furious, and this inspired her to start a campaign for equal rights for women. It is of paramount importance that societies remember and learn from these powerful women. Even with the end of the transatlantic slave trade, that was not the end of the hardships and suffering slave women suffered. Today, slaves still exist, and women and children are a major focus of these modern-day slavers—known today as human traffickers. We as a society should always remember that slavery is a hidden crime that denies women and children their rights and liberties. We should always pay tribute to all those who have fought and will fight against slavery in the past, in the present and in future.

As I conclude, allow me to highlight that, as we remember these victims of slavery, we must also redouble our efforts to address modern forms of slavery and serfdom. We should increase regional and international cooperation with a view to cracking down on such practices. No occasion could be more appropriate than the International Decade for People of African Descent, which happily coincides this year with the twentieth anniverary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, to promote this important agenda. The abuse of modern technologies in this area and the increasing sophistication of human trafficking syndicates necessitate robust regional and international cooperation activities. We cannot allow any manifestations of slavery to exist in the modern world.

The President: I now the give the floor to the representative of Yemen, who will speak on behalf of the Asia-Pacific States.

Mr. Alyemany (Yemen): The Republic of Yemen has the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States in commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade and on the occasion of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

Today, as we remember those who suffered and died during the slave trade, we are reminded that slavery has no place in the civilized world. More than 20 million people are still enslaved. In the world today, men and women, girls and boys are trapped, traded and forced into involuntary service as sex workers, labourers and soldiers. Over a 400-year period, the transatlantic slave trade was the largest forced migration in history. The extensive exodus of Africans to many areas of the world was unprecedented in the annals of recorded human history.

In the past few years, efforts have been made to raise public awareness regarding the slave trade and its lasting consequences on societies throughout the world. As part of those efforts, it is essential to recognize the contribution that enslaved people and their descendants have made to the societies that forced them into bondage. This year's International Day for the Abolition of Slavery comes as the international community is intensifying efforts to achieve the post-2015 development agenda. In pursuing these goals, it is vital that we give special consideration to ending modern-day slavery, which affects the poorest, most socially excluded groups, including migrants, women, ethnic groups that suffer discrimination, minorities and indigenous peoples.

Last year, much progress was made. Many countries have acted to combat slavery through domestic legislation and greater coordination. More and more businesses are working to ensure that their activities do not cause or contribute to contemporary forms of slavery in the workplace and their supply chains. We all strongly support this initiative. We affirm that the partnership of the private sector in implementing these efforts, is critical. Governments continue to play a major role in assisting victims, often with the support of the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery. I urge continued support for that vital initiative. As we mark the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, let us join forces to make our world slavery-free.

In commemoration of the memory of the victims, the General Assembly, in its resolution 62/122, declared 25 March the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, to be observed annually. The resolution also called for the establishment of an outreach programme to mobilize educational institutions, civil society and other organizations to inculcate future generations as to the causes, consequences and lessons of the transatlantic slave trade, and to communicate the dangers of racism and prejudice. Through the consolidation of existing partnerships and the establishment of new ones, the fight against modern slavery is one of the greatest human rights causes of our time.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Slovenia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Marn (Slovenia): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Slavery and the slave trade were horrible tragedies in the history of humankind that cannot be forgotten. For over 400 years, more than 15 million men, women and children were the victims of the transatlantic slave trade. The International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, which we commemorate every year on 25 March, offers the opportunity to honour and remember those who suffered and died at the hands of the brutal slavery system. It also offers the opportunity to remind us that slavery in its contemporary forms continues to exist in all parts of the globe.

We commend the work of the United Nations, its agencies and mechanisms to address those shameful practices. Research, education and awareness-raising are important elements of combating slavery and slavery-like practices. Different initiatives have been taken up in the United Nations in the past years, with a view to educating about the history of slavery, its lasting impact and current slavery issues. Recently, the General Assembly proclaimed the International Decade for People of African Descent, which will be observed from 2015 to 2024.

Today, we have added a new reminder of that horrible tragedy. Just moments ago we unveiled the permanent memorial. *The Ark of Return* will not only contribute to honouring the memory of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade; it will also serve as a constant reminder that the denial of one's freedom is the gravest attack on their dignity and worth. We are very encouraged to see that with the assistance and financial support of many Member States, the efforts to build the memorial were fruitful.

With this year's commemoration, which is devoted to women and slavery, we pay tribute to the many enslaved women who endured unbearable hardships, among them sexual exploitation. We also celebrate those who fought for freedom from slavery and advocated for its abolition. Their work and sacrifices must not be forgotten. We must also not forget the strength of enslaved women, many of whom succeeded in transmitting their African culture to their descendants despite the many abuses they had to endure.

In conclusion, allow me to particularly commend States members of the Caribbean Community and African Group for their tireless efforts in raising awareness on this issue.

The Chair: I now give the floor to the representative of Jamaica, who will speak on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Rattray (Jamaica): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States as Chair for the month of March. This statement reflects the position of our Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

The International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade is an important one on the calendar of international days declared by the General Assembly. It is the pinnacle of a series of events and activities that are bringing focus and attention to the issue of slavery. Among other things, resolution 61/19, adopted as the General Assembly commemorated the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the transantlantic slave trade, designated the Day, and speaks to the purpose behind the commemoration. It reminds us that we not only remember the victims and honour their sacrifice, but we also need to address the legacies that remain from that dark and horrific period of human history.

We are pleased that our countries have been very active in the efforts of the international community to rectify the negative impacts that slavery has had on society, and in the lives of our people. Latin American and Caribbean countries, as reflected by the CELAC special declaration on the initiative of erecting a permanent memorial in honour of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, helped spearhead the initiative to erect the permanent memorial, and are pleased that we have been able to unveil the beautiful and impactful *The Ark of Return* this afternoon. Our countries were actively involved in the push for the proclamation of the International Decade for People of African Descent and the adoption of an ambitious, yet effective, programme of activities to give meaningful implementation to the Decade, through which the international community and its members are called to honour the memory of victims of tragedies such as the transatlantic slave trade, with a view to closing those dark chapters in history and as a means of reconciliation and healing.

We have made these commitments because our countries believe firmly that the most meaningful way to honour the victims of slavery is by dealing with the present realities faced by their descendants who populate our region, bringing the diversity and strength that makes our societies strong. Our CELAC plan of action for Latin American and Caribbean peoples of African descent adopted at the third CELAC Summit held in Belen, Costa Rica, in 2015 guides our efforts to fully incorporate people of African descent and ensure that the development goals at the national and regional levels are inclusive.

This year's thematic focus for the international day and commemoration programme, "Women and slavery", fittingly coincides with the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. That overlap gives us greater opportunity to consider the unique challenges faced by slave women and the role women played in the resistance to slavery and its eventual collapse. Women faced exacerbated hardships for, in addition to being slaves, they were also women — subjected to devaluing, sexual and physical violence, the unequal burden of raising families and caring for the children, the sick and the elderly without their male counterparts, in an often purposeful exercise by the established plantocracy. It was through their resilience, sacrifice, creativity and hard work that many were able to survive, and in some cases thrive despite their circumstances.

These circumstances mirror the very issues addressed by the Beijing Conference and its outcomes. They remain relevant today, because women of African descent continue to face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. The struggle of the slave woman to overcome therefore continues and rests with us to complete the ultimate victory over discrimination and inequality.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the lingering effects of slavery have had and continue to have an indelible impact on our societies. On the one hand, we have a diversity of ethnicity and culture that embodies our valuable human capital. On the other hand, however, we have ingrained social stratification, much of which bears its origins to the colonial era, where exploitation of both indigenous and imported peoples took place. Latin American and Caribbean States are determined, however, to achieve a society where all people are equal, where one's prospects and developmental achievements are not marked by the color of one's skin or their ethnic background. We are striving for fully inclusive societies, where all can benefit from the progress we make and, at the same time, contribute to that progress.

The peoples of our region have suffered an incalculable wrong. In some cases, there has been the beginning of reconciliation and justice. We are mindful, however, that much more needs to be done to balance the scales of justice. The inequalities and repression developed out of slavery and the slave trade were man-made; in the same way, the undoing of those challenges needs to be addressed by all of us working together to ensure that in all the dimensions of sustainable development, those who were exploited and harmed are allowed their just part in global progress. We must ensure that in crafting the global development agenda we take full account of the special needs of those who have been set back by the travesty of slavery. Once and for all we should begin to right those wrongs.

Latin American and Caribbean States will continue to support and lead our collective actions here at the United Nations to honour the victims of slavery, including through the International Decade for People of African Descent 2015-2024, the educational outreach activities of the "Remember slavery" programme, and in any forum seeking to address the legacies of slavery, such as racism, racial discrimination, contemporary forms of slavery and human trafficking. We acknowledge the tragedy; we consider the legacy. We will never forget.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and Other States.

Ms. Frankinet (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and Other States in commemoration of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

Slavery during the transatlantic slave trade was a crime against humanity and among the worst violations of human rights in history. The transatlantic slave trade was an unparalleled tragedy that persisted for over four centuries; it involved the merciless kidnapping, massive abuse and cruel enslavement of millions of Africans, many of whom perished during the horrific journey across the Atlantic.

Today we gather to pay our respects to the countless victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade and to commemorate the immense suffering and injustice they endured. We also pay tribute to the fight against slavery and recall the courage of the enslaved men and women who struggled to end the oppression. It is estimated that one third of the people who were forcibly taken from their homeland in Africa through the transatlantic slave trade were women. Those women who survived suffered tremendously from the hardships of forced labour, sexual exploitation, gender discrimination and rape and torture, yet their stories often remain untold.

We have just witnessed here, at the United Nations, the unveiling ceremony of *The Ark of Return*, the permanent memorial in honour of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. We thank the Chairman of the Permanent Memorial Committee, Ambassador Courtenay Rattray, Permanent Representative of Jamaica, and all of the Committee members for their leadership in that regard. The monument not only serves as a powerful reminder of the unbearable hardship and tragic death of the millions of men, women and children who died as a result of slavery; it also requires us to reflect on the devastating and long-lasting impact of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. It reminds us that much work remains today in order to combat the dangers of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Today's observance occurs during the first year of the International Decade for People of African Descent. We begin the decade with a full and robust commitment to ensuring the rights of persons of African descent and combating racism and discrimination against them. Today's observance should also encourage us to act in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which proclaims in its article 4 that "No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms".

Unfortunately, slavery is not only a tragedy of the past. Today, millions of men, women, and children all over the world are subjected to contemporary slavery-like practices such as sex trafficking, forced labour — including forced child labour, domestic servitude and bonded labour — and early and forced marriage. Women and children, especially adolescent girls, make up the majority of victims of those dehumanizing and abhorrent practices.

It is our obligation as Member States to comply with our obligations under international human rights law and international law pertaining to trafficking in persons; we must redouble our efforts to eradicate all forms of modern slavery and to ensure justice, dignity and freedom for all.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, as host country.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I am honoured to be here today and I wish to begin by reading out a letter from the United States Congressional Black Caucus addressed to the Secretary-General:

> "Dear Secretary-General:
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> "Over four centuries, more than 18 million people were forcefully removed from their homes in Africa and exiled into slavery in the Americas and Europe. Thousands would perish as a result of the cruel treatment undergone during the Middle Passage. For those who survived, the appalling and inhumane conditions of slavery awaited them at their destination.
>
> "Slavery remains an immoral stain on the history of the United States and the collective history of humankind. We can never forget the horrors that were inflicted on our brothers and sisters through slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. Nor can we forget the lingering effects this tragedy continues to have in our society.
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> "The Permanent Memorial at the United Nations in Honour of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade is a reminder of the terrible legacy of slavery, yet for future generations, it serves as an opportunity to understand the history and consequences of slavery, as well as an educational tool to increase awareness about the ever-present dangers of racism and prejudice. The memorial acknowledges the tragedies of slavery but also celebrates the heroic efforts of the slaves, abolitionists and unsung heroes who acted in the face of great danger to end the inhumanities of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.
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> "The placement of the permanent memorial at United Nations Headquarters is a significant symbol of the promotion and preservation of the dignity and worth of all human beings, principles that are central to the Charter of the United Nations. The Congressional Black Caucus is pleased that the United States of America is making a contribution to the permanent memorial through a private-public funding model. That contribution is especially important given the unique role that slavery and the transatlantic slave trade have had in the establishment, development and growth of our country. While the memorial cannot undo the horrors of slavery and the slave trade, or the lingering consequences that still impact the descendants of its victims, it serves to acknowledge its horror, while educating all future generations about the dangers of racism and prejudice. The establishment of the memorial is an important recognition of past horrors and a call to continue our efforts to undo the lasting legacy of racism, which continues to oppress millions."

The letter is signed by Representative G. K. Butterfield, Chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, and Representative Barbara Lee, Member of Congress. I would like to add that we are also very honoured to have witnessed the unveiling this afternoon of *The Ark of Return*, the permanent memorial to the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. It stands as a tribute to all of slavery's victims, including those who escaped bondage and helped others in their journey to freedom.

There is no greater blemish on the history of the United States of America than that of slavery, the crime defined by freedom denied. Around the year 1627, not far from these United Nations Headquarters, the first enslaved Africans arrived in present-day New York City. In fact, one of the walls of New Amsterdam's fort, built by enslaved African people, is bordered by today's Wall Street. The stories of transatlantic slavery and its abolition, along with the stories of heroes, such as Harriet Tubman, who helped free slaves through the Underground Railroad, are woven into the very fabric of our nation.

Over the long arc of history, females in slavery have been exceptionally victimized. That is still true today. While sexual violence is used to compel the servitude of males and females alike, women and girls are often its victims. And victims of domestic servitude, who more often than not are female, are literally held in servitude behind closed doors, invisible to those who might otherwise be able to help, and at the complete mercy of their masters.

Today's observance occurs during the first year of the International Decade for People of African Descent. The United States comes to the Decade with a full and robust commitment to ensuring the rights of persons of African descent, and to combating racism and discrimination against them. Indeed, that is our commitment to members of all groups. So let us take this day to remember the victims of the transatlantic slave trade. Together we abolished that trade, and we must act in accordance with our international and domestic obligations to do the same for modern-day slavery.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa, who will speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Mamabolo (South Africa): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting to commemorate the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

I am speaking today on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The Group notes that the theme for 2015's International Day of Remembrance is "Women and slavery". Women in slavery had to face issues of great complexity. They had to deal with dual oppression because of both their race and their gender. Women had to bear the tortures of slave breeding, sexual exploitation, harassment and working in less than ideal conditions. Despite their suffering, they contributed enormously to the societies they served, helping to ensure the prosperity and growth of modern societies.

The debate today provides us with a unique opportunity to further discuss a horrendous crime against humanity and assist us in our fight against all forms of discrimination and contemporary manifestations of slavery. Political will, strong commitment and new and sustainable partnerships are essential if we are to address past and present injustices in order to develop a new, equitable and just world. The concept of slavery has a very long history; in fact, the tragedy of slavery began some six centuries ago, and is directly linked to the practices of colonialism and imperialism. The width and breadth of the entire continent of Africa, the Caribbean and Asia were devastated by this barbaric practice, which led to the subjugation of the entire continent and its peoples. Slavery and the slave trade, and the transatlantic slave trade in particular, brought about untold miseries, and the cascading effects of those abhorrent legacies are still being felt even today.

At the core of this tragic history of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade is the plundering of the entire continent of Africa and the stealing of her vital resources and artifacts. Slavery has undergone various transformations since its abolition in the nineteenth century, reappearing in the form of indentured labour and bonded labour. It continues to manifest itself in contemporary forms, including trafficking in persons, sexual exploitation, bonded labour and forced marriages. In the current era of globalization, we should accord high priority to eradicating the socioeconomic causes of modern slavery, including, among other things, poverty and underdevelopment, marginalization, social exclusion, economic disparities, instability and insecurity.

We welcome the historic unveiling of the permanent memorial, *The Ark of Return*, as a symbol of remembrance and respect for the victims of the transatlantic slave trade. We also welcome the observance at the United Nations marking the eighth International Day of Remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, in which more than 15 million slaves perished during the Middle Passage while being transported to North America and Europe. We believe that the memorial will serve as a significant symbol and reminder of what the United Nations represents — the promotion and preservation of the dignity and worth of all human beings, principles that are central to its Charter. We hope that it will further serve as a concrete reminder of the painful legacy of the slave trade.

Despite the progress made in our fight against all forms of discrimination, much more remains to be done to overcome the racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerances that continue to bedevil the human race. We call upon the international community to strengthen its political commitment and mobilize adequate resources, which will assist in the comprehensive implementation of the outcomes of the Durban process. New and emerging challenges include misuse of information and communications technology to incite hatred, violence and racism. Recent events within the sporting fraternity are a testimony to the resurgence of a particularly aggressive and at times violent form of racial discrimination.

In conclusion, the Group deplores the continued denial that slavery, the slave trade and the transatlantic slave trade was the worst form of racism and racial discrimination in recorded history. There are vital lessons to be drawn from this grim picture. The international community must continue to encourage educational outreach programmes to raise awareness on slavery and its contemporary forms and take precautions that the tragedy is not repeated by future generations. The Group believes that tolerance and respect for diversity should be the intrinsic value for humanity in the twenty-first century.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Antigua and Barbuda, who will speak on behalf of the Caribbean Community.

Mr. Webson (Antigua and Barbuda): I thank you, Mr. President, for your leadership in bringing the Assembly together to discuss this very important issue.

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Jamaica and South Africa on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and the Group of 77 and China, respectively. I have the honour of speaking today on behalf of the members of the Caribbean Community, the States of CARICOM.

For our people, today is both a solemn and yet celebratory occasion. It is solemn because we commemorate the victims of the heinous crime against humanity embodied in chattel slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. We recall the loss and suffering of millions of our ancestors during that dark period. We remember the injustice and inhumanity, some of which lingers today. It gives us cause to reflect, ponder and meditate.

We nevertheless recognize the celebratory nature of the occasion. We celebrate the fact that, through the struggles, we have overcome. We celebrate the dismantling of the slave trade and of slavery, in solemn remembrance of our people. We celebrate the recognition that all of us, as an international community, must continue to work towards addressing the legacies of slavery. We celebrate the historic unveiling earlier this afternoon of the Permanent Memorial to Honour the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, an initiative pioneered by the CARICOM group that has finally come to fruition.

The theme for this year's commemoration is quite apt, as we mark the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. Focusing on women and slavery presents us not only with the opportunity to uncover the unique ways in which women were particularly affected by slavery but also the significant contributions of women in the resistance movement that led to the abolition of slavery and the slave trade.

We pay due respect and recognition to the role played by women across the Caribbean region in the fight against slavery. One can recount the heroics of the Maroon leader Nanny — we acknowledge the presence today of a descendant of that leader, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica — and the defiance of Zabeth in Haiti, Nanny Grigg of Barbados and many others.

Millions of women struggled to raise and care for their families on plantations even as they were being exploited. Many were subjected to sexual violence and treated as reproduction factories, particularly after the abolition of the slave trade reduced planters' ability to acquire new slaves. In view of their purposeful actions, many women bore the sole responsibility of raising children and managing their homes. One can see the fruits of these seeds today.

Women faced a double burden during slavery, as they were undervalued because of their sex and dehumanized because of their race. Nevertheless, through strength and perseverance, slave women have left for us a legacy of determination, sacrifice, creativity, adaptability and resilience that characterizes Caribbean women today. Having gone through the fire, we have emerged stronger in spite of the ills of the slavery period.

CARICOM reiterates the importance of addressing the legacies of slavery, including racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and prejudice. Having overcome slavery, we cannot tolerate the root cause of that injustice and that inhuman system regaining a foothold in our societies. People of African descent continue to face too many uphill battles in seeking to be treated equally and to have fair access to justice, employment and economic opportunities, quality education, housing, health care and free movement without harassment. In too many places, the boundaries of one's achievements are defined by the colour of one's skin rather than the capacity of one's competence and character. It is no coincidence that there remains a high correlation between poverty and race in many countries, including in countries that are on the upward trend in economic development. That is why it is important that the programme of activities for the International Decade for People of African Descent be effectively used to dismantle inequities and any vestige of the disadvantages faced by the descendants of slavery.

We should also pursue every effort to have meaningful restitution for the wrongs that were perpetrated against children of African descent and of slaves. CARICOM's Reparatory Justice Programme seeks to create the framework within which a just and lasting reconciliation of responsibilities can be achieved. We are open and prepared to engage in a constructive and conciliatory dialogue to ensure that the wrongs of the past can be balanced against the rights of the present and future.

On behalf of the CARICOM group of nations, I would like to express our profound gratitude to our partners across the various regional groups within the United Nations for their support of the CARICOM initiative and effort to erect a permanent memorial as a lasting tribute to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. We want to salute our leading partners, the African group, for their collaboration. We especially thank those delegations that worked with us through the Permanent Memorial Committee, and include there for special mention UNESCO, the Department of Public Information and the United Nations Office for Partnerships. All of us are truly grateful.

We have not forgotten the diligent and committed work of those who pioneered this project from its earliest stages, from the very day it was first mentioned. We must mention the former Permanent Representative of Jamaica, Ambassador Raymond Wolfe, whose tireless work has helped to bring us to where we are. This afternoon we unveiled *The Ark of Return* on the visitor's plaza, the memorial designed and built by a son of the Caribbean, Rodney Leon, of whom we are immensely proud. The permanent memorial will stand on these grounds and speak volumes to hundreds of thousands in the years to come.

I could not close without expressing sincere thanks to all those who made voluntary contributions towards the construction of the memorial. Those included Member States from all regions, of all sizes and at all stages of development. It includes civil society and private individuals who saw a need to commit to this worthy cause.

In closing, CARICOM reiterates that the progress we have made should not cause us to rest on our laurels. In fact, we believe that this opportunity must be built upon. We believe that, by all means at our disposal, we must fight to combat racism and eliminate racial discrimination. The modern-day manifestations of slavery should be not be accepted at any price. We, who have come out of slavery victorious over the inhumanity of that crime, should be at the vanguard and forefront of leading and saying that this tragedy must never again happen. We stand together and say, as a legacy, it must never again occur.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; and the European Free Trade Association countries Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

At the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in 2001, the European Union joined the international community in acknowledging that slavery and the slave trade, including the transatlantic slave trade, were appalling tragedies in the history of humankind, not only because of their abhorrent barbarism but also in terms of their magnitude, organized nature and especially their negation of the essence of the victims. The Conference further acknowledged that slavery and the slave trade are a crime against humanity and should always have been so, especially the transatlantic slave trade, and are among the major sources and manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and that Africans and people of African descent, Asians and people of Asian descent and indigenous peoples were victims of these acts and continue to be victims of their consequences.

In 2007, the General Assembly agreed to establish a permanent memorial on the grounds of the United Nations to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, and today the United Nations community has witnessed the unveiling of the memorial, entitled *The Ark of Return*. The memorial will remind us of the tragic legacy of the slave trade and the need to continue the fight against racism and prejudice.

We would like to acknowledge the work of the committee of interested States and the generous voluntary contributions from Member States, complemented by funding from foundations and private individuals. A particular word of praise is due to Jamaica and its Permanent Representative, Mr. Courtenay Rattray, Chair of the Permanent Memorial Committee, for the leadership and commitment shown to bring this project to a successful conclusion and to all members of the Permanent Memorial Committee for their dedication.

No effort should be spared to raise awareness of and educate and inform current and future generations about the causes, consequences and lessons of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. In this context, we want to acknowledge the work carried out by UNESCO and the Department of Public Information.

This IInternational Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Tradecontributes to the remembrance of the millions of persons who suffered from the transatlantic slave trade. This day should also help us to remember that, despite their prohibition, slavery and slavery-like practices, in the form of trafficking of persons and other forms of modern slavery, persist and constitute flagrant violations of human rights. The lessons of the past should urge us to address this slave trade of our time, including by addressing root causes and by combating discrimination on any grounds. We owe it to the women, men, girls and boys who, as we speak here, are being kept against their will and exploited in appalling conditions. Every victim of modern slavery is one victim too many. We now have legal instruments, such as the Palermo Protocol, aimed at the prevention of trafficking in persons, protection of its victims and prosecution of its perpetrators. Further steps need to be taken towards their full implementation.

The memorial and this day should be a reminder of a time when human beings were treated as commodities that were openly traded, but should also remind us of the victorious fight from oppression to freedom and the quest for universal human rights, guided by the belief in human dignity and in the equality of all human beings.

Mr. Nicholson (Jamaica): Jamaica aligns itself with the statements delivered by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

I am honoured to speak at this year's commemorative meeting and feel particularly privileged to do so following today's unveiling of the permanent memorial. Jamaica is proud of the prominent role played by the member States of the Caribbean Community in the permanent memorial initiative. We feel especially honoured to have been given the responsibility for steering it to its successful outcome.

I express special appreciation to our brothers and sisters from the continent of Africa, who partnered with us throughout the entire process. To the other members of the Permanent Memorial Committee, led at first by Ambassador Raymond Wolfe, former Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the United Nations and now by Ambassador Courtenay Rattray, our current Permanent Representative, I convey our heartfelt appreciation for their dedication to the planning of the year-long series of activities that formed part of the "Remember slavery" programme. Of course, Jamaica remains truly grateful to the entire membership of the United Nations and to those who contributed to the initiative. Without their generous contributions, the project would not have been possible.

Slavery and the transatlantic slave trade have left an injurious legacy, the effects of which continue to be felt in the lives of people of African descent all across the globe. It has manifested itself in racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance. As is often said, those who do not know their history are destined to repeat it. In this regard, there is a need to ensure that the permanent memorial initiative and its associated activities reach and resonate with the people outside these venerable halls. We commend the work of the Secretariat, through the Department of Public Information, for expanding the reach of the programme through partnerships and collaboration with organizations around the world. However, we encourage the Department to further intensify its outreach efforts with a view to ensuring that the lessons of struggle, hope, victory, equality, non-discrimination and harmony are imprinted on the hearts and minds of international citizenry and that bigotry becomes a thing of the past.

It is most fitting that the theme of this year's commemoration is "Women and slavery". We dare not forget that women suffered monstrously during one of the darkest moments in human history. The great human rights icon Nelson Mandela once said that the legacy of oppression weighs heavily on women. The truth of this statement echoes throughout history, as evidenced by the barbarism of slavery and its impact on women. Black women suffered the horror of being raped repeatedly, bred like cattle, robbed of family and denied the joy of nurturing their own children.

The struggle for equal civil rights and the advancement of women has been long, bitter and painful. I pause to recognize some of the heroines of emancipation: the Jamaican national heroine Nanny of the Maroons; the Cuban fighter La Carlota; Mary Prince of Bermuda; and Harriet Tubman of the United States of America. They dared to believe that it was possible to overcome the dehumanization and indignity of slavery and the slave trade. They fought courageously against the evils of oppression, torture and injustice. In paying tribute to the women of the past, let us redouble our efforts to build on the foundations they laid, lest we forget. We must ensure that these stories are told. We must heal the wounds. We must right the wrongs.

Let us also recall that this year marks the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995 and attended by my own Prime Minister, who is here with us today. That Conference produced landmark outcome documents, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which have charted the course towards gender equality and the empowerment of women, journeys on which we have embarked over the past two decades. Let us not fail to give meaning to those commitments, and may history find reason to judge us more kindly where our women are concerned.

Mr. Régis (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): More than twelve years ago, the General Assembly decided to proclaim 2004 the International Year to Commemorate the Struggle against Slavery and its Abolition. The choice of today's date, which marks the bicentenary of the proclamation of Haitian independence, was intended at the same time to be a glowing tribute to Haiti, the first black republic in the world, a symbol of slave resistance and the slaves' struggle against the system of colonial oppression.

Subsequently, the General Assembly adopted resolution 61/19 on the commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. After recalling the horrors of the slave trade, which for 400 years had stripped Africa of some 15 million men, women and children who were transported against their will to the Americas, the Assembly decided to designate 25 March as the annual International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. In the aftermath, the international community was invited to respond to what is a duty of memory by making a fitting tribute to those millions of people and by ensuring that the lessons, history and consequences of slavery and the slave trade are imparted to future generations.

Ms. Rambally (Saint Lucia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Unprecedented in the annals of the history of humankind, the transatlantic slave trade was, to cite the famous phrase, barbarism unprecedented in the history of barbarism. However, it took almost 200 years for the international community to recognize that slavery and the slave trade are crimes against humanity. The inauguration today at the United Nations headquarters of the permanent memorial to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade is therefore powerfully symbolic. It is timely and marks an important milestone in the efforts worldwide to institutionalize memory and prevent forgetfulness.

The Republic of Haiti is even more glad that *The Ark of Return*, a masterful work chosen from over 300 design proposals submitted by artists from 83 countries, is the result of the work and experience of an architect of Haitian origin, Mr. Rodney Leon. I would like to convey to Mr. Leon the congratulations of the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Michel Joseph Martelly, as well as the expression of the admiration of the people and the Government of Haiti.

By its evocative power, through the painful majesty that emerges from it, *The Ark of Return* poignantly recalls the memory of this tragedy to which it restores its rightful place in the minds of us all, as pointed out by UNESCO. The monument now ranks high among the distinctive elements of the visitors' esplanade at the United Nations Headquarters. It challenges and invites us to revisit this past and to reflect on the horrors of the slave trade and to become aware of the consequences of slavery.

Pointing out the symbolism of the work, the architect was compelled at the presentation of the design to say that *The Ark of Return* is both a symbolic spiritual space and an object where one can interact and pass through for acknowledgement, contemplation, meditation, reflection, healing, education and transformation. Indeed, in the never-ending fight for the promotion and absolute respect for human rights, the Memorial addresses everyone with today's essential message, which the Director-General of UNESCO, Ms. Irina Bokova, admirably summarized when she referred to *The Ark of Return* as a bridge over the Atlantic, aptly adding later,

> "From oppression to freedom, from trauma to healing, the Permanent Memorial on the grounds of the United Nations will stand as a symbol of the efforts engaged by the international community and by citizens worldwide to break the silence on this history ... This will be a powerful tribute to the victims, to all women and men fighting for universal human rights."

That is the vocation of the permanent memorial to the victims of slavery and *The Ark of Return* — to raise awareness of this tragedy, which remains one of the greatest violations of human rights in the history of humankind, and at the same time convey a message of peace, hope, tolerance, dignity of the human person and of universal solidarity.

It is to the credit of the United Nations for taking this initiative and for having inspired this beautiful project, which is so well in line with its mission of promoting fundamental freedoms and human rights. I take this opportunity, on behalf of the people and the Government of Haiti, to express our deep appreciation to the General Assembly, the President of the Permanent Memorial Committee, all States of the Caribbean Community and the African Union, and all the Member States that, by their generous contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund for Partnerships — Permanent Memorial, allowed this project to come to fruition.

Our thanks also go to the Secretary-General and the Secretariat; to UNESCO, which, together with the Permanent Memorial Committee, coordinated the first phase of the international design competition; to architect Rodney Leon and the project team; and to all the men and women who, in one way or another, worked for the realization of *The Ark of Return*.

Mr. Guilherme de Aguiar Patriota (Brazil): Brazil associates itself with the statements made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, which reflects the position of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

The year 2015 marks the beginning of the third international decade for people of African descent. In the programme of activities for this decade, we have committed to promoting greater knowledge and recognition of and respect for the culture, history and heritage of people of African descent. The permanent memorial unveiled today is the first concrete initiative in this context, and Brazil is honoured to have contributed to the project at its early stages.

Slavery, the slave trade and the transatlantic slave trade — or the African Holocaust — victimized over 15 million people, much more than any other persecution of ethnic groups since the Second World War. We have been able to eliminate the scourge of slavery. However, racial inequality and discrimination still remain. More than three centuries of slavery and slave trade have seriously impinged on the population of African descent in Brazil, who account for over a 100 million people. People of African descent still have limited access to education, health and housing. They subsist on lower incomes and are more vulnerable to violence. In many cases, they are largely invisible, as if inequality were a matter of course.

Women and girls of African descent experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, vulnerability and marginalization. Young Brazilians of African descent are more vulnerable to violence and account for nearly 80 per cent of the victims of homicides. In addressing racial discrimination and inequality in Brazil, we have made every effort to design programmes and policies that have women as the main beneficiaries. To redress the situation of young Brazilians of African descent, the Government designed a programme to reduce and prevent all forms of violence against them, as well as to promote their social inclusion and empowerment.

We have created a series of specific policies on the fight against poverty and on housing, health and employment. We have included the teaching of Afro-Brazilian history in the mandatory elementary and middle school curricula in order to improve our children's self-esteem and to raise their awareness with respect to the proud history of the African Brazilians. We have broadened access to higher education and to employment through affirmative action in universities and in the public service.

Affirmative action combined with national policies for eradicating poverty have positively impacted the historically marginalized group of people of African descent in Brazil. Over the past 10 years, Brazil has reduced social and racial inequalities. Brazilians of African descent represented 38 per cent of the middle class in 2002. Today, they account for 75 per cent of this new expanding segment.

Combating racism is not an option; it is a moral and ethical obligation. We are a multi-ethnic and multiracial nation. The value of the contribution brought in by Afro-descendants to the country is an answer to the invisibility of victims of racism and discrimination. We Brazilians hold our heritage in high esteem and are proud of the diversity on which our nation and identity are built.

Racism and inequality are incompatible with democracy. The way by which our societies have made this binomial compatible erodes the concept and undermines efforts to effectively build democracy. We must broaden and strengthen — never reduce — the protection spectrum enshrined in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. There will be no effective democracy as long as all forms of discrimination, segregation and intolerance are not permanently banned.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt): At the outset, I would like to seize this opportunity to salute the exceptional leadership of the President and commend him for convening this important plenary meeting to commemorate the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

Today represents a great occasion for the world to pay tribute to and respect the legacy of the victims of a shameful crime. Our African continent long suffered from many types of unfair exploitation of our rich resources, the worse and most brutal of which was the transatlantic slave trade of millions of our young men and women. Humankind underwent various symptoms of social illnesses that were too often related to colour, race, belief or religion. Regrettably, and despite the serious steps taken by the international community to implement the International Convention on the Abolition of Slavery and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and despite the progress in realizing the universality of the International Covenants on Human Rights, it is very saddening that we still witness new forms of slavery and racism in our contemporary world.

This inhuman and tragic phenomenon represented one of the darkest and disgraceful chapters of humankind. However, the negative heritage of slavery, slave trade, colonialism and foreign occupation and domination still manifest themselves in poverty, underdevelopment, marginalization, social exclusion and economic disparities for the developing world. Our battle is not over. Traditional slavery has been abolished and legally banned, but sadly it was replaced by contemporary forms, including debt bondage, forced labour, child slavery, sexual slavery, forced and early marriages, women and girls' exploitation in pornography, trafficking in persons and injustice to workers, immigrants and refugees.

In order to effectively eradicate slavery in all its forms, Egypt stresses that the international community must formulate and implement strategies and programmes that consolidate ethical norms rejecting the notions of superiority and racial domination and promoting the values of equality, tolerance and coexistence. Likewise, it is imperative to show strong political will and coordinate the actions of Governments to enforce international law and protect the rights of all and monitor and confront the growth of racist campaigns and contemporary forms of slavery.

Finally, we reiterate our pledge to work with all Member States to eradicate all contemporary forms of slavery, as well as intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization.

Mr. Lasso Mendoza (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Ecuador adds its voice to the statements made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of Jamaica in his capacity as Chair of our regional Group, which also reflects the position of the States members of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

I would like to highlight the efforts of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) for its leadership both in our region and at the United Nations in implementing these major initiatives to commemorate the victims of the transatlantic slave trade, as well as the leadership of Ambassador Courtenay Rattray, Permanent Representative of Jamaica, in his capacity as Chair of the Permanent Memorial Committee. We can never repudiate enough the horror of the inhuman system of the transatlantic slave trade, which wrenched tens of millions of people from their homes and left mothers without children and children without mothers, and under which female slaves suffered indiscriminate violence and brutality without compassion.

Slavery could have been conceived only by human beings who believed in the evil of the unfettered accumulation of capital. The results have been so horrific that humankind will never be able to fully atone for them. The legacy of that tragedy has endured in the Americas. In my country, for example, the Afro-Ecuadorian peoples have suffered some of the worst discrimination, and their women from its worst forms. In order to combat this, Ecuador has been working to implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, backed by the most vigorous social policy in our country's history aimed at eradicating poverty and exclusion with an unprecedented social investment in health, education, housing, food and social protection focused chiefly on our most disadvantaged populations. We are trying to change the old racist, discriminatory and exclusionary patterns that we inherited from colonial times and that still persist. In that context, in 2012 and 2013, for the first time, we had the honour of seeing 27 worthy Afro-Ecuadorian men and women enter the diplomatic profession.

Finally, I would like to highlight the commitment of our Latin American and Caribbean region, as reflected in the second Political Declaration of Belén, adopted by CELAC in January, which emphasizes the fact that while slavery and the transatlantic slave trade constitute extremely serious crimes against humanity, they have been inadequately studied and their consequences insufficiently acknowledged. The Declaration welcomed CARICOM's creation of a reparations commission designed to identify the problems and challenges that have resulted from the transatlantic slave trade and the genocide of the native populations. At the time the CELAC countries committed to ensuring that such a heinous system can never reappear.

Today, Ecuador reiterates its commitment to continuing to work to ensure the social inclusion of its Afro-Ecuadorian peoples, who, while they became heirs to this tragedy, have powerfully enriched our nation.

Mr. Abdrakhmanov (Kazakhstan): At the outset, I would like to thank the President for convening this commemorative plenary meeting in observation of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. I would also like to thank Ms. Sylviane Diouf for her keynote address and other speakers for their very moving insights on the day's significance.

My delegation would like to align itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Yemen on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States, and I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

Every year, on 25 March, we pay tribute to those who were victimized, tortured and killed as a result of the scourge of slavery. In view of how little is still known about the 400-year-long transatlantic slave trade and its lasting consequences, felt throughout the world, the Government of Kazakhstan, as a gesture honouring the victims for their courage and will to survive, has contributed to the construction of *The Ark of Return* permanent memorial that was unveiled today by the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the Prime Minister of Jamaica in the Visitors' Plaza here in New York. The memorial is a testament to human bravery and the triumph of the human spirit against all odds and indignities.

Since 2015 marks the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, our commemoration this year is rightly dedicated to the theme of slavery and women. As in all situations of injustice and suffering, whether related to conflict, development or natural disasters and other tragic events, women bear the brunt of suffering. Enslaved women therefore bore a triple burden because in addition to enduring the harsh conditions of forced labour as slaves, they experienced extreme forms of discrimination and exploitation as a result of their gender and the colour of their skin. When we contemplate the fate of women trapped in slavery and treated like property or chattel, respect for their dignity and human rights should take precedence.

Slavery did not end with its abolition in the nineteenth century. It has continued to exist, in one form or another, in numerous ways in every country in the world. This illegal practice takes the form of women caught in prostitution, children and adults forced to work in agricultural and domestic work or in factories and sweatshops producing cheap goods for global supply chains. Unfortunately, slavery is still a blight on today's world. According to the International Labour Organization, around 21 million men, women and children around the world are in a form of slavery. Contemporary slavery takes various forms and affects people of every age, race and gender, as in the cases of bonded labour, child slavery, forced labour, descent-based slavery and restrictions of freedom. The right to the truth, which is both an individual and collective right, is therefore essential not only for victims but for society at large. Uncovering the truth of human rights violations of the past can help prevent human-rights abuses in the future.

What we learned from the tragedy of past experience in my part of the world can best be summarized in the words of my President, Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, speaking in May 2002 at the inauguration of a memorial dedicated to victims of repression buried in secret mass graves in Zhanalyk, near Almaty in southern Kazakhstan, at which he said that we should remember not in order to cover our heads with ashes but in order to prevent such tragedies now and in the future. Young people, he said, should be familiar with history and show full respect to the older generations who had survived a time of such great ordeals. We should do everything possible to ensure that this deplorable, unfortunate historical era will never be forgotten, and that the sad lessons of the past would live on in the memories and hearts of all of us. That is something we should remember every day of our lives in the twenty-first century and in every one of our thoughts, words and deeds, not merely on commemorative occasions.

Today is a day to say no to slavery and all forms of abuse and indignity. This seventieth anniversary year of the United Nations and the ushering in of its post-2015 phase is an era for the greater realization and full blossoming of our human potential. Kazakhstan supports the creation of inclusive, multiracial organizations and movements. We have unique constitutional authority in speaking on issues of inter-ethnic harmony through the so-called Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan. We are steadfastly committed to upholding human security and dignity forever, with freedom and justice for all, in Kazakhstan's very diverse, multi-ethnic and multiconfessional society.

Mr. Ruiz Blanco (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, my delegation associates itself with the statements made by the Permanent Representatives of Jamaica and South Africa on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States and the Group of 77 and China, respectively.

This meeting gives us the opportunity to focus on the subject of slavery, particularly of women, a terrifying system and a tragedy of inconceivable proportions for the millions of people who were separated from their families and surroundings in Africa and that in very different ways still affects the more than 200 million of its descendants in the Americas. The designation of this day to commemorate the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade enables us not only to assess the human tragedy of the past but also to appreciate the legacy it has bequeathed to our cultures.

Colombia is firmly committed to its population of African descent, which was why we proposed establishing an International Year for People of African Descent, which the Assembly adopted by consensus under resolution 64/169. Colombia also provided support for the proclamation of an International Decade for People of African Descent, through which we hope to expand national and international efforts to root out the discrimination and inequality that many of our citizens of African origin still suffer from.

The theme of today's commemoration, "Women and slavery", gives us an opportunity to recall the ill-treatment and exploitation of slave women, but also to assess the cultural contribution they made to our societies in the areas of cuisine, care of the family and culture. It is also an opportunity to evaluate how we, the international community, have responded to women of African descent and to ask ourselves if we still have discrimination in our societies; if our societies are prepared to accept diversity and whether or not we are responding to the principles of human rights for our people of African descent. In celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration, we have seen that racial discrimination continues to be a factor in violence inflicted on women and that the world still has a very big job to do in that regard.

In order to begin to fulfil our commitment to the Decade for People of African Descent, on 21 May the Government of Colombia will launch a campaign entitled "Time to fight racism". On that day, more than 1 million public employees will participate in a virtual training course designed to raise awareness of my country's cultural and racial diversity, including the history of its population of African descent; the cultural contributions from them that have enriched and ennobled our world view and in which women have been instrumental; and the contributions they have made to our economy, our education and to building our nation. The training course also covers the rights that the Afro population enjoys in Colombia today.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that the Government included in our new national development plan for the period 2014 to 2017 a commitment to adopting a 10-year plan aimed at ensuring recognition, justice and development for Colombia's Afro population. For 164 years now Colombia's people of African descent have been able to fully exercise their civic rights, such as the right to a democratic vote, and it is my country's wish that we should continue to strengthen every aspect of those rights in order to abolish racial discrimination, exclusion and intolerance in our social behaviour, and to encourage the empowerment of women and girls.

Ms. Al-Nussairy (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation would like to endorse the statement delivered on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly, as well as all those who helped to coordinate today's event, which is a symbol of the victims of slavery that will serve to remind us all of a dark episode in human history.

Today's meeting has focused on women and slavery, and women's experiences and the ill-treatment they endured during that period. In his statement, the Secretary-General noted that while the future should be one of dignity for men and women around the globe, modern forms of slavery still exist in our world — the slavery of terrorism, such as that of Daesh, or the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, which continues to exploit men and women, treating women as chattel by selling them like consumer goods without respect or dignity. Women are treated brutally. Such practices bring to mind the atrocious forms of slavery we saw in previous centuries, and by comparison with the past we can see that what we have today may be worse, with women being exploited and forced to engage in prostitution.

The Government of Iraq is working to make every possible effort to rid itself of those armed terrorist groups, harnessing all its potential to combat terror. They are an evil that has struck not only in Iraq but all over the world. We would like to pay tribute to the efforts of other countries and the international community to help us rid our country of this evil abscess and thereby save the children, women and men of Iraq.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded its commemorative meeting on the occasion of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to conclude its consideration of agenda item 116?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.

United Nations A/69/PV.84

General Assembly
Sixty-ninth session

Official Records

84th plenary meeting
Thursday, 2 April 2015, 11 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kutesa .... (Uganda)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Gunnarsson (Iceland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.

Agenda item 113

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(f) Appointment of members of the Committee on Conferences

The Acting President: In connection with this item, the General Assembly has before it a note by the Secretary-General circulated in document A/69/107.

Members will recall that at its 64th plenary meeting, on 5 December 2014, the Assembly took note of the appointments of the Central African Republic, Namibia, Paraguay and the Russian Federation as members of the Committee on Conferences for a period of three years, beginning on 1 January 2015. Members will also recall that at its 79th plenary meeting, on 2 February 2015, the Assembly took note of the appointment of France as a member of the Committee on Conferences for a term of office beginning on the date of appointment and ending on 31 December 2017. Members will further recall that two seats from the Asia-Pacific States, for a period beginning on the date of appointment and ending on 31 December 2017, remain vacant. On the recommendation of the Chair of the Asia-Pacific States, the President of the General Assembly has appointed Sri Lanka as a member of the Committee on Conferences for a term of office beginning on 2 April 2015 and ending on 31 December 2017. May I take it that the Assembly takes note of this appointment?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: I would now like to draw the attention of members to document A/69/843, in which the Permanent Mission of Denmark to the United Nations announces that Denmark will relinquish its membership in the Committee on Conferences effective 1 April 2015, in favour of Austria, for the remainder of its term ending on 31 December 2016. As a result, a vacancy has occurred and a new member must therefore be appointed to fill the unexpired term of office of Denmark that commenced on 1 January 2014. The President of the General Assembly has therefore appointed Austria as a member of the Committee on Conferences for a term of office beginning on 2 April 2015 and ending on 31 December 2016. May I take it that the Assembly takes note of this appointment?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Regarding the remaining vacant seat from the Asia-Pacific States, I urge the group to submit their candidature as soon as possible.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (f) of agenda item 113.

Agenda item 115 (*continued*)

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Draft resolution (A/69/L.55)

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/69/837)

The Acting President: Members will recall that the Assembly held a debate on agenda item 13 and its sub-item (a), jointly with agenda item 115, at its

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51st plenary meeting, on 14 November 2014. The report of the Fifth Committee on the programme budget implications of the draft resolution is contained in document A/69/837.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/69/L.55, entitled the "Statute of the United Nations Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela Prize". May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/69/L.55?

Draft resolution A/69/L.55 was adopted (resolution 69/269).

The Acting President: I am pleased to be here today to deliver this statement on behalf of the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Sam Kahamba Kutesa.

> "I welcome the adoption today of resolution 69/269, through which the General Assembly has taken another important step in paying tribute to the extraordinary life and legacy of Mr. Nelson Mandela.
>
> "The United Nations Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela Prize is not only dedicated to the memory of Mr. Mandela, but also aims to recognize the achievements of those who dedicated their lives to the service of humankind through the promotion of the purposes and principles of the Organization.
>
> "In accordance with this resolution, Member States, observers, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations will have an opportunity to submit their nominations for this Prize. I encourage all to actively participate in the nomination process, and in the coming days I will take steps to ensure that the inaugural Prize is awarded, in accordance with the Assembly's resolution.
>
> "Mr. Mandela, who was the first democratically elected President of South Africa, remains an international symbol of hope, humility and leadership. His legacy continues to inspire people the world over, spanning generations, races and religions. This unique Prize will serve as an inspiration to all who work tirelessly to contribute to and improve the well-being of others through the promotion of the United Nations highest values, including peace, reconciliation, human rights and development.
>
> "I would like to extend my sincere thanks and gratitude to Ambassador Sabri Boukadoum, Permanent Representative of Algeria, for his leadership and ably conducting informal consultations on the Statute on my behalf. Further, I wish to express my appreciation to Member States for their constructive role and support throughout those consultations.
>
> "As we have done each year since 2010, this 18 July, we will observe the Nelson Mandela International Day in recognition of his values and dedication to the service of humankind. I invite you all to participate in this day's events as we celebrate Mr. Mandela's contributions and service to humankind."

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 115.

Agenda item 123 (*continued*)

(m) Cooperation between the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie

Draft resolution (A/69/L.58)

The Acting President: Members will recall that the Assembly held its debate on agenda item 123 and its sub-items (a) to (y) at its 48th plenary meeting, on 11 November 2014.

I now give the floor to the representative of Senegal to introduce draft resolution A/69/L.58.

Mr. Cisse (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): It is my honour to introduce, on behalf of all the sponsors and under agenda item 123 (m), draft resolution A/69/L.58, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie".

Since the draft resolution was submitted, the following countries have joined the list of sponsors: the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Lebanon, Mali, Mauritania, Portugal, Seychelles, Togo and Tunisia.

I would like to make an oral revision to the text of the draft resolution. In the second line of the third preambular paragraph, the draft should read "76 States Members of the United Nations" instead of "80".

The world today is more than ever beset with multiple challenges with very complex contours that threaten the universal and founding values of our shared humanity. Accordingly, from the problem of development to humanitarian issues or those related to peace and security or human rights, the United Nations is striving to put people at the pinnacle of world affairs. The magnitude of this task, together with an international context characterized by States forming groups based on cultural affinity or regional interests, invites the United Nations to develop and strengthen its partnership with regional organizations. It is in this spirit that the International Organization of la Francophonie and the United Nations have undertaken cooperation aimed at productively addressing the main issues in the world today and in the world of tomorrow.

Draft resolution A/69/L.58 is inspired by the Dakar Declaration, adopted at the most recent Summit of Heads of State and Government of la Francophonie, held on 29 and 30 November 2014 in Dakar under the theme "La Francophonie's women and youth: Vectors for peace, actors for development". It aims to put the issue of development, including sustainable development, at the forefront of our priority concerns while strengthening, inter alia, the provisions relating to peacekeeping, the fight against international terrorism and the promotion and protection of human rights.

Indeed, welcoming the contributions of francophone countries and the International Organization of la Francophonie to the consultations conducted by the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, the draft resolution stresses the need for greater efforts to move from early warning to quick response. In addition to this primary objective, it is important to further promote the participation of women and youth in conflict prevention and peacekeeping efforts, without forgetting the inclusion of the linguistic dimension in peacekeeping operations. Also, given the seriousness of the challenge of international terrorism, the draft resolution urges these States to refrain from financing and harbouring terrorist networks in accordance with international law, including the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Bearing in mind the adoption of sustainable development goals and the ongoing negotiations for the post-2015 development programme, the draft resolution highlights the leading role of women and youth in efforts to set up an inclusive economic development model based on the promotion of human capital. Finally, the draft resolution welcomes the strengthening of cooperation between la Francophonie and the organizations of the United Nations system, such as UN-Women and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and other international partners, including the World Intellectual Property Organization and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

It follows from the foregoing that the cooperation that governs the relationship between the United Nations and la Francophonie remains a key contribution in achieving the goals that we have set for ourselves and that are organized around the three main pillars of our beloved Organization, namely, peace and security, development and human rights. It is my hope that draft resolution A/69/L.58, which should be seen as a relevant instrument for strengthening such cooperation, will be adopted, as orally amended, by consensus and sponsored by a larger number of countries, as has been the case in previous years.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/69/L.58 entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie", as orally revised.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution and in addition to those delegations listed in document A/69/L.58, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cameroon, Estonia, Georgia, Italy, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Montenegro, Ukraine and Viet Nam.

The Acting President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/69/L.58, as orally revised, without a vote?

The draft resolution, as orally revised, was adopted (resolution 69/270).

The Acting President: In accordance with resolution 33/18, of 10 November 1978 and decision 53/453, of 18 December 1998, I now call on the Permanent Observer of the International Organization of la Francophonie.

Mr. Tiendrebeogo (International Organization of la Francophonie) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF), I would like to thank the General Assembly for its adoption by consensus of resolution 69/270, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie". My thanks are those of Ms. Michaëlle Jean, Secretary General of la Francophonie, and of the entire Organization, consisting of 80 member States and Governments from five continents, of which 76 are States Members of the United Nations.

During her first visit to New York, in March 2015, to attend the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Ms. Jean welcomed the particularly successful collaboration between our two organizations and the joint work they do every day. She reiterated the commitment of la Francophonie to taking an active part in the work of the United Nations throughout 2015, including in the preparation of the post-2015 development programme, the International Conference on Financing for Development to be held in Addis Ababa in 2015 and the United Nations Climate Change Conference that will take place in Paris in December.

I would like to express our gratitude to both the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session, Mr. Sam Kutesa, and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the importance they attach to the cooperation between our two institutions. I particularly welcome the extremely successful partnerships with various departments in the Secretariat and with United Nations agencies, including UN-Women. These working relationships reflect the two organizations' shared perspectives on matters in the political, social and cultural fields and on the three pillars of the United Nations: maintenance of international peace and security, development and human rights.

I thank the delegation of Senegal, facilitator of resolution 69/270, for its constant availability and join with it in welcoming the numerous recent developments in cooperation between the United Nations and OIF. This cooperation allows us resolutely to promote cultural diversity in particular the defence of multilingualism, which is necessary condition for effective multilateralism. This implies strict respect for the principle of linguistic plurality in the activities of the Secretariat and the entire United Nations system. It can also be seen in the context of renewed commitment on the part of the International Organization of la Francophonie to fighting terrorism and peacefully managing and resolving crises, including those affecting francophone countries. Such cooperation also allows for active participation in the process of developing and implementing the post-2015 development programme with a view to ensuring that it is inclusive, including by taking into account problems relating to gender equality and young people.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the group of Ambassadors of the International Organization of la Francophonie, who work to promote the values and ideals of the International Organization of la Francophonie within the United Nations, strengthen the links between the two organizations and enhance the realization of the objectives we share. The resolution that the Assembly has just adopted reflects the efforts of the International Organization of la Francophonie and the United Nations to better coordinate and focus their actions, and encourages us to continue our efforts and strengthen our synergies, including with other linguistic groups, with which we already enjoy fruitful cooperation. It was guided by the same spirit that saw us hold, on 20 March, the International Day of la Francophonie, a round table on the theme "Language and diversity: factors of peace". We will work so that together we can take that dialogue further. The International Organization of la Francophonie reaffirms its strong commitment and its readiness to play its full part.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (m) of agenda item 123?

(p) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development — GUAM

Draft resolution (A/69/L.59)

The Acting President: Members will recall that the Assembly held its debate on agenda item 123 and its sub-items (a) to (y) at its 48th plenary meeting, on 11 November 2014.

I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine to introduce draft resolution A/69/L.59.

Mr. Sergeyev (Ukraine): On behalf of its main sponsors — Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine — I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/69/L.59, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations in the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development — GUAM".

The Organization for Democracy and Economic Development — GUAM is an international regional organization comprising four member States: Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. According to its Charter, approved in 2006, GUAM's activities are based on achieving the following purposes: promoting democratic values; ensuring the rule of law and respect for human rights; ensuring sustainable development; strengthening international and regional security and stability; deepening European integration for the establishment of common security space and the expansion of cooperation in the economic and humanitarian spheres; developing social, economic, transport, energy, scientific, technical and humanitarian potential of the parties; and intensifying political interaction and practical cooperation in fields of mutual interest. In order to achieve these purposes, GUAM members are developing mutually beneficial cooperation guided by the principles of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the States, the inviolability of their internationally recognized borders, non-interference in their internal affairs and other universally recognized principles and norms of international law.

GUAM member States interact in the framework of other international organizations, in particular the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations. Under its resolution 58/85, adopted in 2003, the General Assembly granted GUAM observer status. In December 2012, at its sixty-seventh session, the General Assembly adopted by consensus resolution 67/109, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development — GUAM", which, among other things, emphasized the importance of strengthening dialogue, cooperation and coordination between the United Nations system and GUAM.

The current draft resolution before the Assembly, A/69/L.59, is based on the aforementioned resolution. The main objective of the current draft, if adopted, is to reiterate the high level of cooperation between GUAM and the United Nations and to create guidelines for enhancing such corporation. Prior to the official submission of the draft, three rounds of informal consultations were held, where all interested delegations had the opportunity to express to comments and make proposals. I would like to take this opportunity to warmly thank the delegations for their valuable contributions and constructive approach in promoting the draft to the General Assembly, as well as to those delegations which joined the list of sponsors. I would like to ask the Assembly for its kind support for the draft resolution, and I look forward to its adoption by consensus.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/69/L.59, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development — GUAM".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, in addition to the delegations listed in the document A/69/L.59, Latvia and Poland have become sponsors of the draft resolution.

The Acting President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/69/L.59?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 69/271).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (p) of agenda item 123?

It was so decided.

Reports of the Fifth Committee

The Acting President: I request the Rapporteur of the Fifth Committee, Mr. Matthias Dettling of Switzerland, to introduce in one intervention the reports of the Fifth Committee before the Assembly.

Mr. Dettling (Switzerland): I have the honour to present to the General Assembly the reports of the Fifth Committee containing recommendations on issues considered during the first part of the resumed sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

The Fifth Committee met from 2 to 27 March and held seven plenary meetings as well as numerous rounds of informal and informal-informal consultations. Notwithstanding a heavy schedule, it was particularly satisfying that the Committee finished its work on time. I am pleased to give the Assembly a brief account of the results achieved during that session.

On agenda item 132, entitled "Programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015", in paragraph 6 of its report A/69/422/Add.2, the Committee recommends the General Assembly adopt the draft resolution entitled "Special subjects relating to the programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015", which was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

On agenda item 138, "Joint Inspection Unit", in paragraph 6 of its report contained in document A/69/846, the Committee recommends that the General Assembly adopt a draft resolution, which was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

Regarding agenda item 147, "Financing of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals", in paragraph 6 of its report contained in document A/69/693/Add.1, the Committee recommends that the General Assembly adopt a draft resolution, which was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

On agenda item 131, "Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations", in paragraph 10 of its report contained in document A/69/702/Add.1, the Committee recommends that the General Assembly adopt two draft resolutions. Draft resolution I, entitled "Progress towards an accountability framework in the United Nations Secretariat", and draft resolution II, entitled "Procurement", were both adopted by the Committee without a vote.

Finally, in paragraph 11 of the same report, the Committee recommends that the General Assembly adopt a draft decision on questions deferred for future consideration, which was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

I assure delegations that the actions taken during the 34th formal meeting of the Fifth Committee are reflected in the reports before them. On a personal note, I would like to thank delegations for their hard work and the constructive spirit they showed during this fruitful session of the Fifth Committee. We will be guided by the same spirit of cooperation and compromise during our second resumed session in May.

I would also like to thank the Chair of the Fifth Committee for his leadership and dedication, and my fellow Bureau members for their professionalism and friendship. My best wishes for their success go to those who have left the Committee or are soon to do so.

The Acting President: If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the reports of the Fifth Committee that are before it today.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote or position.

The positions of delegations regarding the recommendations of the Fifth Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records. I would like to remind members that, under paragraph 7 of decision 34/401, the General Assembly agreed that

> "When the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, that is, either in the Committee or in plenary meeting, unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee."

I would like to further remind delegations that, also in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendations contained in the reports of the Fifth Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take decisions in the same manner as was done in the Fifth Committee, unless notified otherwise in advance. That means that I would hope that we will proceed to adopt without a vote those recommendations adopted without a vote in the Committee.

Agenda item 131 (*continued*)

Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/69/702/Add.1)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it two draft resolutions recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 10 of its report and a draft decision recommended in paragraph 11 of the same report.

The Assembly will now take decisions on draft resolutions I and II and on the draft decision.

The Assembly will first take a decision on draft resolution I, entitled "Progress towards an accountability system in the United Nations Secretariat". The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

Draft resolution I was adopted (resolution 69/272).

The Acting President: Draft resolution II is entitled "Procurement". The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

Draft resolution II was adopted (resolution 69/273).

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take action on the draft decision, entitled "Questions deferred for future consideration". The Fifth Committee adopted the draft decision without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft decision was adopted (decision 69/553 B).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 131.

Agenda item 132 (*continued*)

Programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/69/422/Add.2)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report.

I now give the floor to the representative of Cambodia, who wishes to speak in explanation of position.

Mr. Tuy (Cambodia): At the outset, I would like to thank the President for convening this plenary meeting on agenda item 132, "Programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015", and the related draft resolution, A/69/422/Add.2. I would like to express Cambodia's view on part I of section III of the report, concerning a request for a subvention to the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC).

I would first like to take this opportunity to acknowledge our great appreciation for the efforts of the Group of 77 and China in support of our request for a subvention to both the international and national components of the Chambers during the Fifth Committee's consultations in December.

Today, I would like to confirm that in a spirit of partnership with the United Nations, the Royal Government of Cambodia supports the revised draft resolution on the proposed subvention for 2015 in limiting it to the international component of the ECCC, in the confidence that the United Nations will be in a position to provide financial assistance to the national component of the ECCC when it becomes necessary. Over the past two years, the ECCC has encountered shortfalls that disrupted the Chambers' operations. It is therefore important that we work together to find a better way to address the funding for the ECCC's national component as well as its international one.

My delegation would again like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report, contained in document A/69/536, in which he discussed the overall atmosphere surrounding the ongoing developments and challenges facing the ECCC. The report also records what has been achieved since the hybrid courts were established in 2006 in close collaboration between the Royal Government of Cambodia and the United Nations.

The Royal Government of Cambodia has continued to cooperate with its partners and all parties involved in the ECCC process to ensure the smooth and uninterrupted functioning of the Chambers during its current conduct of the hearing on the evidence in its case number 002/02 against Khieu Samphan, former Head of State of Democratic Kampuchea, and Nuon Chea, former Chairman of the Democratic Kampuchea People's Assembly. The Assembly may be aware that under ECCC case number 002/01, those two top leaders of the Khmer Rouge were found guilty on 7 August 2014 of crimes against humanity and sentenced to life imprisonment.

Since its creation in 2006, the ECCC has received shared contributions from the Royal Government of Cambodia in kind and in cash. As pledged by Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, during his meeting with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on the margins of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations summit held in November 2014 in Myanmar, in 2015 the Royal Government of Cambodia will continue making its contribution in support of the ECCC to a total amount of $4.1 million. Of that total, $1.6 million goes to general operating costs and $2.5 million to paying the national staff's salaries for the first half of 2015. That total pledge of $4.1 million is equivalent to approximately 62 per cent of the 2015 revised budget for the national component. Despite that pledge, however, we note that there are still gaps to be filled for the second half of 2015. In that regard, while sincerely thanking our partners and donor countries for their financial support, we would like to appeal to them to consider funding the national component of the ECCC for its second semester.

My delegation welcomes the Joint Statement on the ECCC issued on 25 March in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, by the Royal Government of Cambodia and the Special Expert of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Assistance to the Khmer Rouge Trials. In it, both sides expressed their continued full support for cooperation in implementing all the provisions of the ECCC law and the United Nations-Cambodia Agreement in order to discharge the ECCC's judicial mandate and procedures. A memorandum of understanding was also signed on how to operationalize the Legal Documentation Centre, whose construction has been generously funded by the Government of Japan.

Finally, I hope the United Nations will continue to work closely with the Royal Government of Cambodia in order to garner sufficient financial support from donor countries to secure funding for the ECCC's national component for 2015.

The Acting President: We will now take a decision on the draft resolution contained in document A/69/422/Add.2, entitled "Special subjects relating to the programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015". The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 69/274).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 132.

Agenda item 138

Joint Inspection Unit

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/69/846)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report. We will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 69/275).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 138.

Agenda item 147 (*continued*)

Financing of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/69/693/Add.1)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report. We will now take a decision on the draft resolution, entitled "Construction of a new facility for the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, Arusha branch". The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 69/276).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 147.

On behalf of the General Assembly, I would like to thank Mr. František Ružička, Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the United Nations and Chair of the Fifth Committee, the members of the

Bureau and the Secretary of the Committee, as well as all the delegations, for a job well done.

The General Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of all the reports of the Fifth Committee before it.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.